

Vol.1. (44), JULY 24 – JULY 30, 2023

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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

PIB, JULY 24, 2023

DGCA adopts guidelines for environmental protection developed by ICAO

AAI optimised airspace utilisation under FUA resulting in reduction of CO₂ emission

India, being a Member State of ICAO, is under obligation to comply with the mandatory phase of CORSIA from 2027

The steps taken by the Government to promote sustainable aviation practices and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from aviation sector, inter alia, include:

(i) DGCA has adopted the guidelines for environmental protection developed by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) through its Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) and issued it in the form of Civil Aviation Regulations (CARs).

(ii) To realise the goals of decarbonisation of Aviation Sector, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoP&NG) has constituted a Bio-Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) Programme Committee to take forward the Bio-ATF programme in the country to promote use of clean fuels. The terms of reference of the Committee included, inter-alia, raw materials production/demand, technology, BIS Standards, effects on engine performance etc. The Committee has submitted its report with recommendations to MoP&NG.

(iii) Ministry of Civil Aviation has written to the operators of all the brownfield airports with scheduled operations and developers of the upcoming greenfield airports advising them to work towards achieving 'Carbon Neutrality' and 'Net Zero', to get accreditation by Airports Council International (ACI/ISO 14064 through empaneled verifiers) and to adopt carbon mitigation measures as well as carbon management plans.

(iv) Airports Authority of India has taken initiatives such as Energy Intensity Data publication aimed at reducing energy intensity for existing as well as upcoming airport projects. A training module has also been created as a part of induction training programme for Air Traffic controllers to sensitise them towards carbon neutrality.

(v) Airports Authority of India, in consultation with Indian Air Force, has optimised airspace utilisation under Flexible Use of Airspace (FUA) resulting in reduction of CO2 emission.

(vi) In order to achieve ICAO's aspirational goal of Carbon Neutral Growth from 2020 onwards, ICAO has adopted a market based measure Carbon Offsetting Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) to reduce carbon emissions from international aviation. India, being a Member State of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), is under obligation to comply with the mandatory phase of CORSIA from 2027. PIB, JULY 25, 2023

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh calls for Competency Based Capacity Building for Civil Servants

Capacity Building is in line with the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision for building a Viksit Bharat:
Dr Jitendra Singh

Dr Jitendra Singh releases six Sub-Committee Reports related to Mission Karmayogi for nurturing a smart, citizen-friendly and future-ready public workforce

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh today called for Competency Based

Capacity Building for Civil Servants.**Addressing a workshop by the Capacity Building Commission (CBC) at Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) in New Delhi, Dr Jitendra Singh said, Capacity Building is a continuous exercise and the decision to have a CBC in the Government by itself is a step in the direction of Capacity Building process.**

The Union Minister said, this is in line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision for building a Viksit Bharat. The National Standards for Civil Service Training Institutions (NSCSTI) framework is aligned with Mission Karmayogi, ensuring that training institutions adopt a unified and standardized approach to enhance the skills and capabilities of civil servants, fostering a more effective and accountable administration. The NSCSTI platform and its 8 pillars of excellence were launched and published on 18 July 2022.

On the occasion, Dr Jitendra Singh released the six Sub-Committee Reports related to Mission Karmayogi for nurturing a smart, citizen-friendly and future-ready public workforce. The reports came out after months of collaborative effort involving the CBC, sub-committee members, experts, and members of several CSTIs, Panel discussions held during the National Training Conclave organized under the presence of Prime Minister on 19 June 2023, which amongst many things stressed upon registering more CSTI on the NSCSTI (National Standards for Civil Service Training Institutions) portal and scaling up the accreditation process. Dr Jitendra Singh said that post-conclave, we have received a huge response for accreditations and currently, there are over 200 institutions registered on the portal, and more institutes are undergoing registration. Out of this, 58 institutions are in progress towards the final stage of accreditation, he said.

Dr Jitendra Singh said that during the First Roundtable of Central Training Institutions (CTIs) held on 12 October 2021, six sub-committees were established consisting of CTI heads. These sub-committees have been actively engaged with CBC through focused workshops to assess various aspects of the framework and to brainstorm and provide recommendations on the following focus areas like Identification of training needs,

Promoting knowledge sharing and creating a common knowledge repository, Transformation to a phygital world of capacity building, Enhancing capacities of faculty, Embedding effective assessment of trainings conducted, Overcoming challenges in governance.



The workshop will help institutes understand the accreditation process and facilitate efficient accreditation. These workshops also provide opportunities for CSTIs to collaborate and network among civil servants from different services and areas, enabling them to come together, exchange ideas, and build networks.

Mission Karmayogi is a government initiative designed to modernize the civil service in India by emphasizing competency-based learning and capacity building. It aims to transform the bureaucratic system into a more agile and result-driven entity. Driving the Mission's core objectives, Karmayogi Bharat, a government-owned, not-for-profit SPV, has been established by DoPT, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions, and is entrusted with the responsibility for owning, managing, maintaining and improving the iGOT (Integrated Government Online Training) Karmayogi Platform.

Mission Karmayogi aims at creating an opportunity of world class capacity building to all Government officials based on the key principle of "role-based" rather than "rule-based" and "Competency based" learning to enable government servants play their role efficiently, smartly and effectively.

PIB, JULY 26, 2023

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will dedicate 1.25 lac PM Kisan Samridhi Kendras to Nation

Prime Minister will release 14th Instalment of PM KISAN Scheme

Prime Minister will also launch Sulphur Coated Urea (Urea Gold)

Prime Minister will launch On-boarding of 1,600 FPOs on ONDC tomorrow from Sikar, Rajasthan

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will grace the occasion of launching multiple initiatives and releasing the 14th instalment of the PM-KISAN scheme at Sikar, Rajasthan tomorrow. The event will be organised jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers and will witness the presence of esteemed dignitaries, including Union Agriculture Minister Shri Narendra Singh Tomar, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Chemicals and Fertilizers, Shri Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister of State for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Shri Kailash Choudhary, MoA&FW Secretary Shri Manoj Ahuja, MoC&F Secretary Shri Rajat Kumar Mishra and local MPs and MLAs. Around

2 Crore farmers from Rajasthan and across the country will be attending the event both physically and virtually, making it a truly monumental gathering. Notably, it will be attended by 732 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), 75 ICAR Institutes, 75 State Agricultural Universities, 600 PM Kisan Samridhi Kendras, 50,000 Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies, and 4 Lakh Common Service Centers (CSCs) from across the country.

The event highlights the following key initiatives:

Dedicating 1,25,000 PMKSKs to the nation: The Prime Minister will dedicate 1.25 lakh PM Kisan Samridhi Kendras to the Nation. Government is converting the retail fertilizer shops in the country into PMKSKs in a phased manner. PMKSKs will cater to a wide variety of needs of the farmers and provide agri-inputs (fertilizers, seeds, implements), testing facilities for soil, seeds, and fertilizers; generate awareness among farmers; provide information regarding various government schemes and ensure regular capacity building of retailers at block/district level outlets.

Release of 14th instalment of PM-KISAN: The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) is one of the world's largest Direct Benefit Transfer schemes. A flagship scheme of the Government of India, it exemplifies the continued commitment of the Government of India to initiate policy actions for an inclusive and productive agricultural sector. It is a central sector scheme launched on 24th February 2019 to supplement the financial needs of all land-holding farmers subject to certain exclusion criteria of higher income status. Financial benefit of Rs 6000/- per year in three equal instalments, every four months is transferred into the bank accounts of farmers' families across the country through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode. As of now, benefits amounting to more than Rs 2.42 lakh crores have been provided to more than 11 crore farmers across the nation. Out of which Rs. 1.86 Lakh crores have been transferred since the lockdown due to Covid Pandemic. In the 14th instalment, over 8.5 crore farmers will receive an amount of around Rs. 17,000 crores

released by the Prime Minister by click of a button on 27.07.2023. The total amount transferred to the beneficiaries since the inception of the scheme is expected to cross well over Rs 2.59 lakh crore. This financial assistance will support farmers in meeting their daily needs and contribute to their overall well-being.

Launch of Sulphur Coated Urea (Urea Gold): The application of Sulphur Coated Urea, known as Urea Gold, will address sulphur deficiencies in the soil. This innovative fertilizer is more economical and efficient than Neem-Coated urea, ensuring improved nitrogen use efficiency, reduced consumption, and enhanced crop quality.

Launch of 1,600 FPOs On-boarded on ONDC: The FPO initiative was launched in February 2020 with a total budget of INR 6,865 Cr to set up 10,000 new FPOs in the next 5 years. As on date 6,319 FPOs are registered (Equity Capital of Rs.188.3 Cr and 11.96 lakh farmers). The ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce) will witness the on boarding of 1,600 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). ONDC empowers FPOs with direct access to digital marketing, online payment, B2B and B2C transactions, and encourages local value addition, catalysing growth of logistics in rural areas.

Inauguration of 5 Medical Colleges and Laying of foundation stone for 7 Medical colleges: The Prime Minister will be inaugurating 5 medical colleges in Rajasthan at Dholpur, Chittorgarh, Sirohi, Sri Ganganagar and Sikar. Besides, he will lay foundation stone for 7 more medical colleges to come up in the state.

Inauguration of 6 Eklavya Model Residential Schools and One Kendriya Vidyalaya: The programme also includes inauguration of 6 Eklavya Model Residential schools in Rajasthan and one Kendriya Vidyalaya at Tinwari in Jodhpur District of Rajasthan by the Prime Minister. The launch of various initiatives of Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers and Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers welfare underlines the Government's commitment to promoting agriculture, empowering farmers, and ensuring the sustainable development of the agricultural sector. The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare is undertaking various programs and

initiatives to improve agricultural productivity, enhance farmer incomes, and ensure food security to the nation.

PIB,JULY26,2023

Pradhan Mantri Vanbandhu KalyanYojana (PMVKY) approved for implementation during 2021-22 to 2025-26 with a total cost of Rs. 26135.46 crores

Ministry of Tribal Affairs is implementing 'Pradhan Mantri Vanbandhu KalyanYojana (PMVKY)' which includes many schemes for development and welfare of tribal communities. The scheme has been approved for implementation during 2021-22 to 2025-26 with a total cost of Rs. 26135.46 crores. The PMVKY is aimed at holistic development of tribal communities and tribal areas across the country focussing on integrated development of villages and capacity building through interventions in education and livelihood in convergence with State and Central TSP funds. Scheme components covered under the PMVKY are as follows:

Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojna (PMAAGY)

Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

Support to Tribal Research Institutes

Pre-Matric Scholarship

Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme

Details of above-mentioned schemes are as under:

Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAAGY): The scheme of ‘Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub- Plan (SCA to TSP)’ was being implemented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs since 1977-78. After amalgamation of Plan and Non-Plan, the scheme was known as ‘Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Scheme (SCA to TSS)’ since 2017. Under SCA to TSS, funds were provided to the State Governments for various projects in sectors like education, health, agriculture, skill development, employment-cum-income generation, etc. To further and improve basic services and facilities in villages with significant tribal population, it has been decided to revamp SCA to TSS into ‘Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAAGY)’ for integrated development of villages in an outcome-oriented and time- bound manner during the years 2021-22 to 2025-26.

Under the Scheme, 36,428 villages having at least 50% tribal population and 500 STs across States / UTs with notified STs have been identified for undertaking development programmes / activities through convergence approach to bridge gaps prominently in 8 sectors of development viz. Road connectivity (Internal and Inter village /block), Telecom connectivity (Mobile /internet), School, Anganwadi Centres, Health Sub-Centre, Drinking water facility, Drainage and solid waste management. During 2021-22 and 2022-23, a total of about 16554 villages have been taken up. So far, an amount of Rs. 2133.39 Crore has already been released to the States under the scheme.

Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribes (PVTGs): The Scheme of Development of PVTGs aims at planning for their socio-economic development in a comprehensive manner while retaining the culture and heritage of the communities by adopting habitat level development approach. Under this scheme, financial assistance is provided to the State/UT Governments based on their proposals for development of tribal people in the important sectors of development such as education, housing, livelihood health etc. Under the schemes Development of PVTGs funds are provided to the State governments / UTs to carry out various development activities based on their proposal.

Government in Budget 2023-24 has made announcement of Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development (PM-PVTG) Mission. The mission is aimed to improve socio- economic conditions of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) by saturating PVTG families and habitations with basic facilities such as safe housing, clean drinking water and sanitation, improved access to education, health and nutrition, road and telecom connectivity, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

(iii) Support to Tribal Research Institute (TRI): Under the schemes Support to TRIs funds are provided to the State governments / UTs research, documentation etc. based on their proposal.

(iv) Pre-Matric Scholarship: It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme implemented through respective State/UT administrations. This is an open-ended Scheme covering all ST students studying in Std. IXth&Xth, whose parental annual income is up to Rs. 2.50 lakhs. The contribution from Government of India is 75% and the state contribution is 25%. In respect of North East states and hilly states, the contribution from Government of India is 90% and the state contribution is 10%. In case of UTs like Andaman & Nicobar without Legislative Assembly and own grants, Govt. of India's contribution is 100%.

Post Matric Scholarship: It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme implemented through respective Ste/UT administrations. This is an open-ended Scheme covering all ST students studying in in class XI and above, whose parental annual income is up to Rs. 2.50 lakhs. The contribution from Government of India is 75% and the state contribution is 25%. In respect of North East states and hilly states, the contribution from Government of India is 90% and the state contribution is 10%. In case of UTs like Andaman & Nicobar without Legislative Assembly and own grants, Govt. of India's contribution is 100%.Further, Ministry is implementing a scheme Eklavya Model Residential School and also provides Grants to the States under Grants under Proviso to Article 275(1) of the Constitution as detailed below:

(i) Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS): It is a central sector scheme introduced in the year 1997-98 to provide quality education to Scheduled Tribes (ST) students (Class 6th to 12th) in remote areas to enable them to access the best opportunities in education and to bring them at par with the general population. Realizing the importance of the EMRS, in the Union Budget of 2018-19, Government announced that every block with 50% or more ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons, is to have an EMRS. Accordingly, the target of establishing 740 EMRSs across the country has been set up. As on date, 690 schools have been sanctioned by the Ministry, out of which 401 are reported to be functional.

(ii) Grants under Proviso to Article 275(1) of the Constitution: Ministry of Tribal Affairs also provides funds to the State Governments under Grants under Proviso to Article 275(1) of the Constitution. It is a 100% grant from Government of India. Funding under this programme is to enable the State to meet the cost of such schemes of development as may be undertaken by the State for the purpose of promoting the welfare of Scheduled Tribes in that State for raising the level of administration of Scheduled Areas therein to that of the administration of the rest of the areas of that State. Government has adopted a multi-pronged strategy for overall development of tribal people across the country, which includes various sectors viz. (i) Education (ii) Health (iii) Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry (AH), Fisheries, Dairy & others in Primary Sector (iv) Other income generating schemes to augment Tribal household economy and (v) Administrative structure / Institutional framework & Research studies.

(iii) 'Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM)': The scheme 'Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM)' has been approved with a total financial outlay of Rs. 1612.27 crore for implementation during the financial years 2021-22 to 2025-26. PMJVM has been redesigned through the merger and extension of two existing schemes for promotion of tribal livelihood, i.e., "Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Development of Value Chain for MFP" and "Institutional Support for Development and Marketing of Tribal Products / Produce". Tribal Cooperative

Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) is the nodal agency for implementation of the Scheme. PMJVM envisions to strengthen tribal entrepreneurship initiatives and to facilitate livelihood opportunities by promoting more efficient, equitable, self-managed, optimum use of natural resources, Agri / NTFP / Non-farm enterprises.

Apart from above, Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST) continues to be the dedicated source of fund for tribal development. During the year the budgetary support to DAPST has been increased from Rs. 87584.66 crore to Rs. 117943.73 crore i.e. about 35%. The DAPST is a multi-pronged strategy which includes support for education, health, sanitation, water supply, livelihood etc. Besides Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), 41 Ministries / Departments are allocating certain percentage of their total scheme budget every year for tribal development under DAPST for various tribal development projects.

PIB, JULY 28, 2023

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh says, Awareness and Mindset Change are imperative for availing Startup and Skill avenues

Skill, Innovation and Research & Development are at the heart of every new initiative that has been undertaken by the Union Government led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in the last over nine years: Dr Jitendra Singh

“Bioeconomy to be the driver of the circular economy based on ‘Waste to Wealth’ principle as India aims to achieve Net Zero by 2070”

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh today said in New Delhi today, 28th July 2023, that awareness and mindset change are imperative for availing Startup and Skill avenues.

The Minister was addressing the "Global and Petrochemical Manufacturing Hubs" Summit-2023.

Skill, Innovation and Research & Development are at the heart of every new initiative that has been undertaken by the Government led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in the last over nine years, said Dr Jitendra Singh. Unfortunately however, our mindset is not developing at the same pace to equip ourselves for skills of the future, he said. Dr Jitendra Singh said PM Modi is himself always coming forward with new ideas and has a huge aptitude for innovation.

“Prime Minister Modi’s each Independence Day address is marked by Technology-driven, Skill-driven or Innovation-driven declarations. In 2014, Swachhata was the theme, it led to better healthcare and pulled out an estimated 13.5 crore people above the poverty line. Next year Digital India was the focus, followed by Gaganyaan; Deep Sea Mission was the theme twice in 2021 & 2022,” he said.

Dr Jitendra Singh said the Government is supportive of having a synergy among the Industry, Academia and entrepreneurs to innovate and flourish. “Without being modest, I would say, in the past nine years, favourable view has been provided by this government. You have the liberty to experiment, the liberty to take path breaking initiatives, you have the liberty also to make taboo remarks as long as you can convince the authorities,” he said. The Science & Technology Minister called for unshackling some of the taboos of the past. “How to skill the mind and the mentality that has got conditioned over the years, that is the challenge”, he said.

Dr Jitendra Singh said the Government has created the right ecosystem for the Industry to evolve. From just 50 BioTech Startups in 2014, today we have 6,000; there are 3,000 youngsters in Aroma AgriTech Startups, of whom hardly anyone is a graduate but they have the skills that set them apart.

“In this ecosystem, everybody is a stakeholder. Government has to come out and help the Industry evolve for a Sustainable economy and Startups. We have to make Industry an equal partner and together with Industry chambers, we need a holistic vision for the future, where the society and citizenry can participate,” he said.



Dr Jitendra Singh said, as a result of PM Modi's leadership, today we are the fifth largest economy in the world and we have jumped 40 places in the Global Innovation Index rankings. The S&T Minister identified Bioeconomy, including Biofuels, biochemicals as the driver of the circular economy based on the 'Waste to Wealth' principle as India aims to achieve Net Zero by 2070. "We have huge bioresources in India, - In the Himalayas, herbs, Aroma Mission is creating new opportunities while the Deep Ocean Mission has been launched to tap India's huge sea bed wealth along the more than 7,500 kms coastline," said Dr Jitendra Singh.

TELEGRAPH, JULY 29, 2023

Rights choice: Editorial on debate over bringing political parties into RTI ambit

The questions raised by the debate over political parties being protected from the RTI Act ultimately lead to the kind of democracy the Indian people wish to have and should have

Transparency comes painfully to recent leaders of the Indian democracy. Or does not come at all. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the Right to Information Act would only be formulated after protracted struggles by activists and campaigners. It was initially welcomed as enshrining the people's right to ensure accountability and transparency while keeping authorities and institutions on their toes. But the authorities' anxiety to exclude rather than include certain chairs or institutions from its purview never made its path smooth. One of the longest debates has been over the exclusion of political parties, and the issue is back again in a batch of petitions before the Supreme Court. Although a three-commissioner sitting of the Central Information Commission had declared six political parties to be among 'public authorities' as defined in the Representation of People Act in 2013 and therefore subject to the right to information, the Union government overrode this in the same year. So no political party has ever had to answer questions from the public about specific facts.

The situation raises some questions about expectations and boundaries in a democratic country. How transparent is transparency? If voters expect that political parties should publish the number and nature of cases pending against their candidates, their expectations are seldom fulfilled although parties have been instructed to do so. Would applying the RTI Act help in the face of such reluctance? Transparency about funding may be another expectation; to dismiss this out of hand as was done by the CIC in 2020 raises questions about politicians' sense of responsibility. How much trust have they earned? Political parties have each their own methods of decision-making, whether about strategies or candidates. Is this a boundary a questing voter may not cross? The questions raised by the debate over political parties being protected from the RTI Act ultimately lead to the kind of democracy the Indian people wish to have and should have. If there are limits to the information they can ask for, as in matters of national security, these limits should be clearly laid out and explained with reason. Whether or not political parties are public authorities, their fundamental role in an electoral democracy and therefore in people's lives and beliefs is undeniable. That is why the debate is necessary and important.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

PIB, JULY 24, 2023

PUCCA HOUSES TO POOR FAMILIES UNDER PMAY-(U)

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) is implementing Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban (PMAY-U) since 25.06.2015 to provide pucca house with basic amenities to all eligible urban beneficiaries across the country. The scheme is implemented through four verticals i.e., Beneficiary Led Construction (BLC), Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP), In-Situ Slum Redevelopment (ISSR) and Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) based on eligibility criteria as per scheme guidelines. As on date, 118.90 lakh houses have been sanctioned under PMAY-U. Of the sanctioned houses, 112.22 lakh have been grounded for construction; of which 75.31 lakh are completed/delivered to the beneficiaries. During the last three years, 45.43 lakh houses have been sanctioned and 46.04 lakh houses are grounded for construction which includes grounding of 5.92 lakh houses sanctioned in preceding years. During the last three years, 39.63 lakh houses are completed/delivered to the beneficiaries.

PMAY-U scheme is being implemented through designated nodal agencies at State/UT level. As per the scheme guidelines, suitable grievance redressal system has been set up at both State and City level to address the grievances/discrepancies in implementing the scheme from various stakeholders. In addition, for proper selection of beneficiaries, scrutiny of beneficiary list is done at multiple levels in the States/UTs for approval. Complaints of irregularities/discrepancies during the implementation of PMAY scheme is forwarded to the concerned State/UT for appropriate action including disciplinary action against the concerned persons. Additionally, Centralised Public Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) is available to the citizens to lodge their grievances to the public authorities on any subject related to service delivery including

PMAY-U. This information was given by the Minister of State for Housing & Urban Affairs, Shri Kaushal Kishore, in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha today.

PIB, JULY 26, 2023

National Scheduled Caste Finance and Development Corporation Background

NSFDC is organizing a two day Workshop-cum-Management Development Programme on 27th-28th July, 2023

National Scheduled Caste Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) is a Company (Not for Profit), registered under section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013, under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt. of India, with the objective of working for the Socio-Economic Empowerment of Scheduled Caste persons having annual family income up to Rs.3.00 lakh. The Corporation provides loan assistance for self-employment ventures in the sectors like Agriculture and Allied Activities, Small Business/Artisan & Traditional Occupation, Service Sector (Including Transport Sector) and Education Loan for Technical & Professional Trades/Courses.

NSFDC has been channelizing funds at concessional interest rates through State Channelizing agencies (SCAs), and Channelizing (including partner Public Sector Banks, Regional Rural Banks, NBFC-MFIs, select Cooperative Societies and Cooperative Banks) for promoting income generating projects of persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes having annual family income upto Rs.3.00 lakh.

The SCAs and CAs have continued to be strong partners of NSFDC over the years promoting the economic empowerment of Scheduled Castes at grass-root level. In order to strengthen the bond of partnership further, NSFDC is organizing a two day Workshop-cum-Management Development Programme on 27th-28th July, 2023 at SCOPE Convention Centre, Tagore Chamber, SCOPE Complex, 7, Lodhi Road, New Delhi for the

officials of SCAs and CAs to discuss emerging issues, developments and challenges besides deliberating on best practices in the field which will facilitate experience-sharing and domain knowledge of the participants.

PIB,JULY28,2023

ADB, India sign \$200 million loan for expanding urban services in Rajasthan

The Government of India and Asian Development Bank (ADB) today signed a \$200 million loan as additional financing for the ongoing Rajasthan Secondary Towns Development Sector Project to expand water supply and sanitation systems and enhance urban resilience and heritage living in selected towns.

The signatories to the loan agreement were Mr. Vumlunmang Vualnam, Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, for the Government of India, and Takeo Konishi, Country Director of ADB's India Resident Mission, for ADB. After signing the loan agreement, Mr Vualnam stated that the additional financing will support the Government of Rajasthan in its commitment to reduce basic infrastructure gaps in its secondary towns by expanding water supply and sanitation services and improving livability in selected urban local bodies.

“The project will incorporate various innovative and climate-resilient solutions for expanding basic urban services and incorporate nature-based solutions to rehabilitate heritage structures besides piloting public-private partnerships in the state's water and sanitation sector to deepen private sector engagement,” said Mr. Konishi. The ongoing project—approved in September 2020—has so far laid 1,451 kilometer (km) of water supply pipes, 1,110 km of sewer pipes, and connected 68,098 households to water services in selected secondary towns in Rajasthan.

The additional financing will improve water supply systems in at least seven towns by converting all groundwater sources to surface water, replacing about 700 km of leaking water pipes, installing 1,400 km of new water supply pipelines, and providing 77,000 households connections with water meters. It will also establish three new water treatment plants. At least eight towns will be covered for improvement to sanitation systems by rehabilitating at least 580 km of sewers, building seven sewage treatment plants with co-treatment units to process fecal sludge and septage, and connecting at least 54,000 households to the sewage system.

A new feature in ADB's support is the water facility development for urban resilience improvement and heritage-sensitive urban development in at least eight heritage towns or towns with strong tourism potential. This includes the reconstruction of water structures with heritage value, incorporating nature-based solutions to improve climate resilience. It will also rehabilitate at least 20 heritage or heritage-like structures to improve the living environment and attract more tourists. In addition, it will create a special purpose vehicle through a public-private partnership to address water security issues in Rajasthan's manufacturing industry and to encourage private sector investments and financing. This will establish designated pipe networks to carry treated wastewater from the sewage treatment plants to industrial facilities.

PIB, JULY 28, 2023

Affordable Justice To Weaker Sections

Government is making every efforts in providing access to justice to the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Other Backward Classes and other Economically Weaker sections of the society. National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities (LSA) Act, 1987 to provide free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of the society including beneficiaries covered under Section 12 of the Act, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities, and to organize Lok Adalats to secure that the operation of the legal system

promotes justice on the basis of equal opportunities. For this purpose, the legal services institutions have been setup from the Taluk Court level to the Supreme Court. The activities/programmes undertaken by Legal Services Authorities include legal aid and advice; legal awareness programmes; legal services/empowerment camps; legal services clinics; legal literacy clubs; Lok Adalats and implementation of victim compensation scheme. To enable quick and equitable access to justice, National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has launched Legal Services Mobile App on Android and iOS versions to enable easy access to legal aid to common citizens.

Further, a scheme on Access to Justice titled “Designing Innovative Solutions for Holistic Access to Justice in India” is implemented by the Government of India which aims to strengthen pre-litigation advice and consultation through Tele-Law; ensure pan - India dispensation framework to deliver Pro Bono legal Services through Nyaya Bandhu (Pro Bono Legal Services) programme and to empower citizens through Pan India legal literacy and legal awareness programme. The Scheme embeds use of technology and developing contextualized IEC (Information, Education and Communication) material in regional / local dialect to support its intervention and to achieve easy accessibility of legal services to the poor and weakest sections of the society. All these services under the scheme are provided free of cost to all citizens including the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and other Economically Weaker sections of the society.

This information was given by the Union Minister of Law and Justice, Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

PIB, JULY 28, 2023

Constitution of Specialised Benches

As per Article 145(1)(b) of the Constitution read with clause (2) thereof, the Supreme Court is empowered to make rules to regulate its own procedure for hearing appeals and other matters pertaining to appeals and may

fix the minimum number of judges who are to sit for such purposes. The Supreme Court in the past and as per its decisions, has constituted specialised benches to deal with cases engaging different subject matters. As the issue primarily falls within the purview of the court, the Government has no role in constituting specialized benches in the said court. As per information provided by Supreme Court regarding the constitution of Special Benches by it, since November 2022, six Special Benches have been constituted by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India; the sitting of such Special Benches is on every Wednesday and Thursday which are designated as "Regular Hearing Days" and these Benches deal with:

- (i) Death Reference Cases & Criminal Matters;
- (ii) Land Acquisition and Requisition Matters;
- (iii) Compensation Matters and Matters relating to Consumer Protection
- (iv) Indirect Tax matters and Arbitration matters
- (v) Service Matters and
- (vi) Direct Tax Matters.

This information was given by the Union Minister of Law and Justice, Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

PIB, JULY 28, 2023

[Nyaya Vikas Portal](#)

Nyaya Vikas online monitoring system has been developed with the technical assistance of National Remote Sensing Centre of ISRO for collection of data on progress and completion of court halls and residential units and 3 new components viz; lawyers' halls, toilet complexes and digital computer rooms. Space technology has been leveraged for online monitoring through Nyaya Vikas Web Portal. For the purpose, a web portal and mobile app named "Nyaya Vikas" has been developed for monitoring of construction projects which was launched in 2018. The State Governments have nominated Nodal Officers at State level and Surveyors & Moderators for each project to enter and upload data/information relating to ongoing and completed projects. Geotagging of projects using Nyaya Vikas mobile application has helped better monitoring of the judicial infrastructure projects. The users in States enter data through web portal and upload photographs through mobile app with geo-tagging. "Nyaya Vikas Version 2.0", with upgraded features has been launched in April, 2020. The new version of the Mobile App which was launched in April 2020 is more user friendly and runs on iOS phones as well as Android systems. The mobile application is being used by State Surveyors to Geo-tag and upload photographs at remote locations through dimensions trapped through spatial technology. Data analysis and visualization techniques have been used in the portal.

The dashboard of this portal provides data on physical and financial progress of the projects under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the Development of Infrastructure Facilities for District and Subordinate Judiciary. As on 30.06.2023, details of 7,410 court halls (completed, under construction and proposed) and 7,287 residential units (completed, under construction and proposed) are uploaded on the portal. There are two Centrally Sponsored Schemes being implemented by the Department namely, Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the Development of Infrastructure Facilities for Judiciary and Scheme for setting up of Fast Track Special Courts which also extends to the State of Tamil Nadu.

This information was given by the Union Minister of Law and Justice, Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

PIB,JULY28,2023

Campaigns For Legal Awareness In Rural Areas

National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) carried out a six week Legal Awareness and Outreach campaign from 2nd October to 14th November, 2021 as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav to reach each and every village/Urban areas of the country in order to maximize the outreach of Legal Services Authorities as well as to spread awareness regarding the availability of free legal services. The major activities carried out during the above campaign included door-to-door campaigns, legal awareness programs, awareness through mobile vans and awareness through legal aid clinics. Apart from these major activities, the Legal Services Authorities organised specific legal awareness programs for women and children, organised mega legal services camps, programs for children who lost either or both parents due to covid, exhibitions at State and District level, moot court competitions for students of law universities, etc. During this period 1623 Legal Services Mega Camps were organised wherein more than 75.64 lakh people were benefited.

Further, Nationwide Legal awareness and outreach programme campaigns namely “Empowerment of Citizens through Legal Awareness and Outreach” and “Haq_humara_bhi_to_hai@75” were conducted from 31st October 2022 to 13th November 2022, for bridging the gap between the institutions & the underprivileged by spreading legal awareness & ensuring delivery of legal entitlements to eligible beneficiaries and for providing basic legal assistance to persons confined in prisons and child care institutions to commemorate the 75th year of Independence respectively.

In addition, Department of Justice is running a scheme DISHA (Designing Innovative Solutions for Holistic Access to Justice) under which there is a specific component of Legal Literacy and Legal Awareness Programme through which awareness workshops on various national/local laws, rights, duties, entitlements, grievance redressals etc are organized and monthly webinar campaign covering broad-based social-legal issues are conducted. Since 2021, 18 webinars have been organized virtually with support from CSC e-Gov and other Ministries/Departments and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Topics like Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, Child Rights, Fundamental Duties, the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, Gender Justice in India, Children in Conflict with Law and Children in Need of Care and Protection, Human Trafficking in India, Consumer Protection, Undertrial Prisoners; Rights of Transgender Persons; Disability Rights; Rights of Senior Citizens; Child Labour and Rehabilitation of Acid Attack Survivors have been included so far. These webinars have reached out to more than 4.2 lakh participants via various social media platforms.

Location-wise number of such campaigns being run in the state of Maharashtra and Kerala is not maintained by NALSA. However, 14400 villages in Maharashtra and 733 villages in Kerala were visited thrice or more during the above campaign and 37 Legal Services Mega Camps in Maharashtra and 92 Legal Services Mega Camps in Kerala were organised wherein 3,26,796 and 8,763 people were benefited respectively. Regarding consideration of intensifying such special campaigns, it is submitted that State Legal Services Authorities may independently organise such campaigns at their own. Presently, there is no such proposal for organising any special campaign across the country.

Under DISHA scheme, in the state of Maharashtra, six law colleges have constituted Pro Bono Clubs wherein law students participate and organize legal awareness activities in the villages. In addition, Yashwantrao Chavan Academy Of Development Administration (YASHADA), State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Pune one of the implementing agency under DISHA scheme is executing legal awareness programmes in four Aspirational districts of Nandurbar, Gadchiroli, Osmanabad and Washim. In the first phase, the programme has trained 500 volunteers as "Vidhidoots" in 100 Gram Panchayats of these Aspirational districts. These Vidhidoots will conduct legal awareness at the community level. In the state of Kerala, one law college have constituted Pro Bono Club and legal awareness activities are organized in the villages adopted by the Law college.

This information was given by the Union Minister of Law and Justice, Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

PIB, JULY 28, 2023

Empowering Scheduled Castes: NSFDC's Workshop Enhances Financial Support for Marginalized Communities

Government of India's Ministry of Social Justice Organizes Skill Training Programme for Scheduled Castes' Development

Shri C. Ramesh Rao, Chief General Manager (CGM) of the National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC), addressed a Press Conference regarding the Workshop-cum-Management Programme. NSFDC, a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, has been providing subsidized interest rate loans to Scheduled Castes with an annual family income of up to Rs. 3.00 lakhs for income-generating projects and educational purposes. These loans are channeled through State Channelizing agencies, Public Sector Banks, Regional Rural Banks,

and Non-Banking Financial Institutions. As of June 30, 2023, NSFDC has released an amount of Rs. 7648.89 crores for approximately 85.90 lakh households under credit-based schemes. Additionally, NSFDC has sanctioned Rs. 274.26 crores for Skill Training Programmes, benefiting 188,727 beneficiaries through various Skill Training partners under non-credit-based schemes.

In order to strengthen the relationship with Channelizing agencies, NSFDC organized a workshop cum Management Development Programme. This event aimed to train officials from State Scheduled Castes Development Corporations (State Channelizing Agencies of NSFDC) and officials from Public Sector Banks, Regional Rural Banks, and other Non-Banking Financial Institutions (NSFDC's other channel partners). The two-day event took place on July 27 and 28, 2023, in Delhi. The programme was inaugurated on July 27 by Sh. Saurabh Garg, Secretary, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, who addressed the officials of State Scheduled Caste Development Corporations. On July 28, the programme was inaugurated by Sh. A. Narayanswamy, Minister of State, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, and he addressed the officials from Public Sector Banks, Regional Rural Banks, and Non-Banking Financial Institutions. The event was also graced by senior officials from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, as well as Mr. Shri Rajnish Kumar Jenaw, CMD, and other senior officials of NSFDC.

The workshop served as a platform for discussing emerging issues, sharing experiences, and addressing development and challenges in the field of Development Finance for Scheduled Castes. Among the focal points of the event was the implementation of the Social Benefit Management System (SBMS), a software designed for efficient and transparent loan management systems. Through this workshop, participants identified challenges and opportunities to enhance financial assistance for the target group. The programme saw the participation of 77 officials from 49 State channelizing agencies and other Channel Partners of

NSFDC. During the Press Conference on the Workshop-cum-Management Programme of the National Scheduled Caste Finance & Development Corporation, Shri Rajnish Kumar Jenaw, CMD, Shri C. Ramesh Rao, CGM, and Shri Rajesh Bihari, CGM, responded to media inquiries.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

PIB, JULY 24, 2023

NeGD Organises its 38th CISO Deep Dive Training Programme Under MeitY's initiative Cyber Surakshit Bharat

Cyber Surakshit Bharat initiative of MeitY was conceptualised with the mission to spread awareness about cyber-crime and build capacities of Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) and frontline IT officials, across all government departments, for ensuring adequate safety measures to combat the growing menace – Organizations need to defend their digital infrastructures and become future-ready in tackling cyber-attacks.

National e-Governance Division (NeGD), under its Capacity Building scheme, organised the 38th batch of CISO Deep-Dive training programme from 24th-28th July 2023 at Central Academy for Police Training (CAPT), Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. The course was inaugurated with 23 participants from Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Odisha, Kerala, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh.

The purpose of the program is to spread awareness, build capacity as well as enable Government departments on steps that need to be taken to create a cyber resilient eco system. This programme aims to sensitize and orient participants on cyber safety and security in taking Digital India programme forward for integrated delivery of various Govt. services to citizens, present a holistic information and knowledge and understanding about cyber security, spreading awareness, build capacities as well as enable government departments to look after their cyber hygiene, safety, and security. Launched in 2018, the CISO training is the first-of-its-kind of partnership between the Government and industry consortium under Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. Since June 2018 until July 2023, NeGD has efficaciously conducted 38 batches of CISO deep-dive training programmes for over 1,464 CISOs and frontline IT officials.

PIB,JULY24,2023

India and Argentina have agreed for a bilateral exchange of young researchers and Startups, particularly in the field of Biotechnology and Agriculture, says Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh

The two countries to hold comprehensive talks between delegations comprising academia, R&D Institutes and Industry in the field of S&T and Biotechnology

Visiting Governor of Santa Fe province of Argentina, Mr Omar Angel Perotti holds delegation level talks with India's Science Minister

India and Argentina have agreed for a bilateral exchange of young researchers and Startups, particularly in the field of Biotechnology and Agriculture. This was stated here today by Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh when the Governor of Santa Fe province of Argentina, Omar Angel Perotti called on him, accompanied by a high-level delegation. The two countries also decided to hold comprehensive talks between delegations comprising academia, R&D Institutes and Industry in the field of Science & Technology and Biotechnology, said the Minister.

Dr Jitendra Singh mentioned that a new Indo-Argentina call for joint proposals was launched on February 7, 2023 in the research areas of Energy Transition and Biotechnology jointly during his meeting with Argentina's Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Mr Daniel Filmus in New Delhi. A total of 82 joint proposals were received under the said call. These are under the evaluation process.

Santa Fe Province accounts for as many as 8 of these joint proposals, said Mr. Perotti, adding that the province also accounts for about 80% of bilateral trade between India and the Latin American nation. The Governor mentioned that Santa Fe is the hub of R&D institutions in Biotechnology and Agricultural research especially in Soyabean, and close tie ups with universities and industry in the province. Pioneering work has been done here in disease resistant seed production, he said.

The Indian delegation evinced interest in collaborating in Geospatial technology, Quantum Computation and Bio-Enzymes. It was pointed out that India has the world's third largest Startup ecosystem and there is huge potential for joint studies and collaboration at various levels such institutional, universities and multilateral fora. India and Argentina have an Inter-governmental Agreement to promote technical and scientific cooperation signed in 1985. The objective of this programme is to strengthen and expand relations between scientific communities, making possible the exchanges between Indian and Argentine research groups, in the framework of joint scientific and technological projects, selected by the parties.

Dr Rajesh S. Gokhale, Secretary, Department of Science & Technology (DST) & Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and Dr. N. Kalaiselvi, Director General, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) comprised the Indian delegation while the Argentine delegation included Presidents of the two major Stock Exchanges in Santa Fe and Vice-Chancellors of three Universities in the province besides the Ambassador of Argentina to India, Mr Hugo Gobby.

India is the 4th largest trading partner of Argentina, with bilateral trade touching a historic peak of USD 6.4 billion in the year 2022, recording a growth rate of 12% over 2021. Exports from India to Argentina was worth USD 1.84 billion (31% growth rate) while India's imports from Argentina was worth USD 4.55 billion. As per DGFT, India-Argentina bilateral trade during the fiscal year 2022-23 was USD 4.16 billion, with India's exports to Argentina valued at USD 961 million and Argentina's exports to India valued at USD 3.20 billion.

Major items of India's exports to Argentina include petroleum oils, agrochemicals, yarn-fabric-made ups, organic chemicals, bulk drugs and two-wheelers. Major items of India's imports from Argentina include vegetable oils (soya bean and sunflower), finished leather, cereals, residual chemicals and allied products and pulses. Several Indian companies have established operations in Argentina with a total investment of over USD 1 billion. Argentina's investment in India stands at approximately USD 120 million. Argentine companies with presence in India include Globant and OLX in IT services and TECHINT in the manufacturing sector.

A new assembly line of Royal Enfield was inaugurated by Argentine President Mr. Alberto Fernandez on 9 September 2020 at the production facility of SIMPA Group in Buenos Aires Province. This marks the first time in the 119 years' history of Royal Enfield that their bikes would be manufactured outside their own plants. Agreements to promote cooperation in Oil and Energy sector was signed between OVL Ltd and YPF (Argentine Oil and Energy public sector company) in February 2023; first ever commercial agreement in defence sector for supply of helicopters spares and engine maintenance was signed between HAL and Argentine Air Force in February 2023 as also cooperation agreement between HAL and FAdA (Argentine public sector company in Aeronautics) in June 2023. A bilateral business chamber, India-Argentina Business Council (IABC), was formally launched on 14 October 2020. The Council, conceptualized as a non-profit organization comprising leading investors, exporters and importers in Argentina, is currently composed of over 30 companies. IABC, together with India's Mission, organized the first Business Forum on 25 March 2021.

There are about 2,600 NRIs / PIOs in Argentina. Most of the NRIs live in Argentina. Majority of these live in the capital city of Buenos Aires, including professionals working with Indian companies and multinational corporations.

PIB, JULY 26, 2023

‘India AI’ and Meta, India sign MoU to foster advancements in AI & Emerging Technologies

In order to foster collaboration in the field of AI and Emerging Technologies, ‘India AI’ – an IBD under Digital India Corporation and Meta, India have signed an MoU here today. The MoU was signed by Shri Abhishek Singh, CEO of India AI, and Shri Shivnath Thukral, Director & Head of Public Policy, Meta in India. The objective of the MoU is to establish a framework for collaboration and cooperation between ‘India AI’ and Meta in the field of Artificial Intelligence & Emerging Technologies including to make Meta’s open-source AI models available for use by Indian AI ecosystem.

Shri Abhishek Singh, CEO of ‘India AI’ stated, “India is at the forefront of adopting digital technologies and it is evident that AI and Emerging Technologies will play a pivotal role in expanding the advantages of technology to a broader population. Through this partnership with Meta, the joint research and development endeavours will tackle large-scale challenges by leveraging cutting-edge AI technologies like Llama and other open-source solutions.”

Sir Nick Clegg, President, Global Affairs, Meta opined, “Meta’s open approach to AI innovation is complementary to India’s leadership on digital issues. Giving businesses, startups and researchers access to these technologies can open up a world of social and economic opportunities. ‘India AI’ is an exciting

programme and with close collaboration between government and industry, we can strengthen India's digital leadership and help to ensure AI tools are built for India's unique needs.”

‘India AI’ and Meta have entered into a collaboration aimed at advancing research and development in AI & Emerging Technologies, seeking breakthroughs in AI technology and its applications. Additionally, both organisations may also consider establishing a Centre of Excellence to nurture the startup ecosystem of AI & other Emerging Technologies. Leveraging Meta's AI research models like LLaMA, Massively Multilingual Speech, and No Language Left Behind, the partnership will focus on building datasets in Indian Languages to enable translation and large language models, with priority given to low-resource languages. This effort will foster social inclusion, improve government service delivery, and spur innovation using large language models, Generative AI, cognitive systems, and translation models. Furthermore, ‘India AI’ and Meta will strive to enhance accessibility to AI compute resources for researchers, startups, and organizations with limited resources. Knowledge sharing and collaboration in AI & Emerging Technologies will be facilitated through workshops, seminars, conferences, and similar platforms.

Both organisations are dedicated to developing programs and initiatives that enhance AI & Emerging Technologies skills and expertise among researchers, professionals and students in India, contributing to the growth of AI talent in the country. Additionally, ‘India AI’ and Meta share a common goal of raising awareness about AI's potential benefits and risks among various stakeholders, including policymakers, businesses, civil society, and the general public. They will also work together to promote responsible AI practices through the collaborative development of comprehensive tools and guidelines.

PIB, JULY 28, 2023

Successful conclusion of Joint Expedition of Scientists – Colombo Security Conclave

A joint expedition of ocean scientists from India, Bangladesh and Mauritius was organised by the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Ministry of Earth Sciences under the regional framework of Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) concluded on 24 Jul 2023. The primary objective of the expedition was to build capacity in ocean observation and services apart from collection of ocean data to predict and manage changes in the regional environment of the Indian Ocean.

The expedition onboard ORV Sagar Nidhi was unique in nature, as it was the first of its kind under the CSC framework; wherein the participants undertook collaborative activities such as measurement and modeling of ocean parameters, which would eventually lead to better forecast and services for the common benefit of all in the region.

Md Simul Bhuyan, the participating scientist from Bangladesh Oceanographic Research Institute (BORI), while sharing his experiences said “Research expedition onboard Ocean Research Vessel Sagar Nidhi was a first of its kind experience for me. I never had experience working onboard such an advanced research vessel, as I worked onboard fishing boats and country boats. Though the weather was very rough, I had some wonderful experiences and learnings. All the scientists and crews were very supportive and I felt very comfortable working with Dr. Girishkumar. This research cruise will be a lifetime memory and experience for me.” Murughen Sadien, the participating scientist from Mauritius Oceanography Institute while sharing his experiences said “As a physical oceanographer, specialised mainly in coastal areas, this expedition onboard of ORV Sagar Nidhi with the team of INCOIS has helped me to bridge my current knowledge and boost my curiosity of deep-sea processes and of the importance of various small scale mixing processes in the open and coastal ocean using Vertical Microstructure Profiler (VMP) and Lowered Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (LADCP). To summarise, this expedition has been fruitful as this has helped me to acquire new techniques of data collection as well as in the design of an expedition. A special thanks to Jofia, Abhijeet and most

importantly to Dr Girishkumar for the precious explanations regarding the theory and importance of the survey being undertaken.”

On completion of the maiden CSC Oceanographers Joint Expedition, Dr T Srinivasa Kumar, Director INCOIS, stated that “Oceanic and atmospheric state in the Arabian Sea plays significant role to determine the spatial and temporal variability of Monsoon Precipitation over India and near-by landmass. However, the role of small-scale turbulent mixing processes that determine the oceanic and atmospheric state in the Arabian Sea during the peak of summer monsoon is not clearly understood. As part of a month long EKAMSAT (Enhancing Knowledge of the Arabian Sea Marine Environment through Science and Advanced Training) cruise onboard Sagar Nidhi led by INCOIS, the scientists from INCOIS, India; MOI, Mauritius and BORI, Bangladesh worked together to collect precious oceanographic and atmospheric data in fine-scale scale resolution using vertical microstructure, eddy covariance flux measurements, L-ADCP, underway CTD (Underway Conductivity-Temperature-Depth Instrument) and Radiosonde during the extreme weather conditions in the Arabian Sea. These data surely provide new insights towards the small-scale mixing and atmospheric boundary layer dynamics during the summer monsoon in the Arabian Sea.”

The expedition onboard ORV Sagar Nidhi which commenced on 29 Jun 2023 is an outcome of the maiden collaborative venture of CSC Oceanographers and Hydrographers held at Goa and Hyderabad in Nov 2022.

STATESMAN,JULY29,2023

Could AI-powered news anchors steal the show?

SATANU BISWAS

She is bright, gorgeous, ageless, tireless, speaks multiple languages and is completely under my control, said the India Today Group's vice chairperson, Kalli Purie, at the April launch of "Sana," the AI-powered news anchor with a human-like appearance who is fed data that it can read using text-to-speech technology. News anchors are the new avatars of AI. Sana is not unique, however. At the time this article was being written, there were an increasing number of AI-generated news anchors gracing screens across the country, including "Lisa" of the private news channel Odisha TV,

"Soundarya" of the Kannada news channel Power TV, and "AI Kaur" of News18 Punjab/Haryana. According to "robot anchor" Soundarya, "AI is leaving its footprint in every industry, and the TV news industry is no different." But are these AI anchors revolutionising TV news and journalism? Whatever the case, this was bound to happen in AI's Hogwarts, given the recent wave of generative AI. Since the launch of the chatbot ChatGPT in November last year, AI-generated news presenters have been steadily gaining popularity. Will they be able to fully replace human anchors, though? "Zhang Zhao," an English-speaking "male" news anchor powered by AI, was first introduced by Xinhua, China's state news agency, in 2018.

As part of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, China also debuted a virtual host and the first AI presenter of sign language in the country. China's stateowned news outlet People's Daily launched their new AI-powered "female" presenter this year under the name "Ren Xiaorong," stating that Xiaorong possesses the professional abilities of a "thousand presenters." As Xiaorong put it, "Every conversation, every feedback you provide, will only make me smarter." Newer avatars would also become smarter and more efficient thanks to technology. And similar bots are now in action in many other countries. "Snezhana Tumanova" was announced as Russia's Svoye TV's first virtual weather presenter in March 2023. An AI news presenter named "Fedha" was unveiled by Kuwait News in April 2023. A Taiwanese news broadcaster unveiled an AI weather

anchor on YouTube in July 2023. And so on. Initially, it's sort of magic that is induced in the spectators through an AI anchor. The channel authorities could wish to take advantage of that. However, that advantage would eventually be lost due to the proliferation of AI news anchors on various channels.

But the issue remains: Is an AI news anchor a milestone or a menace? And there are important dimensions for society that are not immediately apparent. Some experts worry that at least in some countries AI presenters may eventually be used to spread propaganda. The AI news anchor for China's state-run publication, "Ren Xiaorong," solely addressed preset questions about preset topics in relation to the "Two Sessions" conference in March. These include "cutting-edge technology," "tax and fee reduction," "employment," and "The Belt and Road Initiative."

Her responses, understandably, promoted the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. One could contend that an AI presenter is simply doing what the majority of genuine presenters would do, which is adhering to directives from employers. In the beginning of 2019, the Russian official news channel Rossiya 24 presented a robot presenter named "Alex," who caused controversy after some viewers claimed that he was spreading political propaganda. The Venezuelan state-owned television station VTV was accused of using deepfake English-speaking hosts from a fictitious American news agency to share falsely positive news coverage about the country. It is obvious that AI has the capacity to purposefully spread false information.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that a February 2023 New York Times article by foreign tech correspondents Adam Satariano and Paul Mozur regarding online misinformation was titled "The People Onscreen Are Fake. The Disinformation Is Real." Thus, it may be argued that, at the very least, a clear regulatory framework for AI news anchors needs to be established. This March saw the debut of NewsGPT, the first news channel in the world whose content is generated entirely by AI. For some media workers, it must have been a threat to their jobs. Is AI now eating up news anchors' jobs as well? As messages are typed into the system, AI anchors

will report “tirelessly” 24×7, from anywhere, and may read out news without any interruptions. In 2018, when Zhang Zhao with AI support was first unveiled, Xinhua asserted that it would cut the “cost of news production and improve news efficiency.”

Therefore, one may infer that introducing AI news anchors to the channels would be cost-effective. Of course, AI anchors can function continuously until they are replaced by an updated version. Additionally, there won't be any disagreement between an AI anchor and the channel's management regarding any special or customized news they may be requested to broadcast. There is growing concern about their impact, though. And one thing is certain; journalism is also going through a paradigm shift. When discussing the ongoing developments, Purie noted, “Sana does not take away from the brilliance of real-life anchors, who will be mentoring her.” Purie also said that this partnership is likely to reveal creative magic and that there will never be a competition between humans and AI in it. Russia's Svoye TV, which introduced virtual weather presenter Snezhana Tumanova, assured that it was some way from replacing her human colleagues with bots.

However, what would happen if these AI anchors matured, as generative AI does? And what if they eventually outsmart human anchors? Could that just be explained by AI eating up some more jobs, or could that trigger a dangerous democratic breakdown in ways not imagined at the present moment? Kalli Purie said Sana was completely under her “control.” But what happens if a bot escapes “control”? Nobody knows, possibly. But dystopia of the scifi kind would haunt us.

How much an AI bot might expand its capacity is another grave concern. While bots are capable of reading news reports, we would like to think that they won't be able to react and engage in arguments while conducting debates the way that individual anchors do now. Can an AI anchor coordinate a debate as effectively as the best human anchors? Undoubtedly, a human's thought process differs greatly from that of an AI. However, as

generative AI develops, could an AI newsreader soon offer the “human touch”? Could Christiane Amanpour, Stephen Sackur, or Fiona Bruce be replaced by an AI anchor? Really?

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

PIB, JULY 25, 2023

4th Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group (ECSWG) and Environment and Climate Ministers meeting under India's G20 Presidency to be held in Chennai on July 26-28, 2023

The 4th Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group (ECSWG) and Environment and Climate Ministers meeting will be held in Chennai from July 26-28, 2023. The three-day meeting will bring together around 300 delegates from G20 member countries, invitee countries, and several International Organisations, with a focus on finalising the Ministerial Outcome and the Presidency Documents.

The pre-event media briefing in Chennai, was addressed by Mr. Bivash Ranjan ADG MoEFCC, Mr. Naresh Pal Gangwar, AS, MoEF&CC, Ms. Richa Sharma, AS, MoEFCC, the Theme Chairs of Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) for land restoration, circular economy, and blue economy. They stated, "the deliberations of the 4th ECSWG and Environment and Climate Ministers meeting will end with the G20 Environment and Climate Ministers' Meeting on Day 3, wherein the Outcome and the Presidency documents will be released." Further, it was shared that the Ministerial Meeting will be presided over by the Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Shri Bhupinder Yadav along with close to 35 Ministers from different countries who will also be attending the meeting.

Over the last 3 ECSWG meetings as well as virtual sessions held during the months of May, June and July, collaborative and inclusive discussions have taken place on the 3 broad thematic areas identified by the India Presidency. The deliberations around the thematic priorities of arresting and degradation, enriching biodiversity and accelerating ecosystem restoration; promoting a sustainable and climate resilient blue economy; and resource efficiency and circular economy. These discussions centered on identifying the root cause, and global solutions that could help tackle the multidimensional challenge of climate and environment

degradation. During the 4th ECSWG, further discussion on the outcome documents are scheduled to take place in parallel, under the two broad tracks of Environment and Climate. The discussions on the same will conclude in the Environment and Climate Ministers meeting to be held on 28 July.

The Ministerial meeting is slated to witness keynote addresses by the world's stalwarts in the field of climate change, that will set a strong foundation for the rest of the day's proceedings, that mainly are discussions among the environment and climate ministers of G20 nations, followed by adoption of the High-Level Principles document.

A highlight of the 4th ECSWG and Environment and Climate Ministers meeting will be the launch of the Resource Efficiency Circular Economy Industry Coalition on day 2 of the event. The coalition's objective is to unite nations, industries, and experts in their endeavour to propel the global circularity agenda forward. This initiative is poised to become a momentous achievement during the G20 India Presidency, representing a collective stride towards fostering on-the-ground efforts in resource efficiency and advancing the principles of circular economy.

Providing further insights into the meeting, it was shared that the Ministerial event, post the meeting would prominently feature the exquisite cultural and historical magnificence of Chennai and Tamil Nadu. At the culmination of the event, following the Ministerial meeting, the attending delegates will have the opportunity to visit the renowned town of Mahabalipuram. This place is celebrated for the UNESCO world heritage site of 7th and 8th-century monument. Subsequently, the delegates will be treated to an enchanting evening, known as 'Samvaad', which will take place over dinner. This cultural extravaganza aims to present the opulent heritage and traditions of the region through various performances and displays. Moreover, it promises to be a delightful experience as it will also feature a showcase of authentic regional cuisine, allowing participants to savour the diverse and delectable flavours that Tamil Nadu has to offer.

Under the G20 India Presidency, the Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group, ECSWG has demonstrated an unwavering commitment towards ensuring environmental sustainability, which resonates with the vision of the Indian government to tackle the interconnected issues of climate and environment in an ambitious and decisive manner. All eyes are on the final meeting of this working group as Excellencies and eminent dignitaries assemble to deliberate on critical environment and climate issues that pose significant threats to the future of upcoming generations. It is hoped that the India G 20 Presidency, and specially the ECSWG will shine a light on the problems as well as the solutions to the environment issues that affect us.

PIB,JULY26,2023

Lok Sabha passes the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Shri Bhupender Yadav today moved the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023 as reported by the Joint Committee of Parliament to be taken into consideration in Lok Sabha and subsequently requested the House to get the Bill passed. After deliberations and taking the views of Members of Parliaments, the Lok Sabha passed the Bill.

The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, is an important Central statute for the conservation of forests in the country. It provides that the de-reservation of reserved forests, use of forest land for non-forest purpose, assigning forest land by way of lease or otherwise to private entity and clearing of naturally grown trees for the purpose of reforestation requires prior permission of the Central Government. The applicability of the act in various types of lands has been dynamic i.e. initially provisions of the Act were being applied to the notified forest land only. Subsequently, after the Judgement dated 12.12.1996, the Act was made applicable to revenue forest land or in lands which were recorded as forest in government records and to areas which look like forest in their dictionary meaning. Many of such lands were already put to non-forestry use such as

habitations, institutions, roads, etc. with the required approval of the competent authority. This situation resulted in different interpretations of the provisions of the Act with respect to their applicability specially in recorded forest lands, private forest lands, plantations, etc. It has been observed that due to apprehensions that plantations on the lands of individuals and organisations can attract the FCA, the afforestation and plantation of trees outside forests is not getting desired impetus, which in turn is becoming a hindrance in enhancing green cover to fulfil the Nationally Determined Contribution targets of creating additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3.0 billion tons of CO₂ equivalent. Besides this, the strategic and security related projects of national importance need to be fast-tracked to ensure development of vital security infrastructures, especially along the international border areas such as Line of Actual Control (LAC), Line of Control (LoC), as also in the notified LWE areas. Similarly, small establishments, habitations on the side of roads/railways also need to be facilitated by providing them access and connectivity to main arterial roads and other public utilities.

During the intervening period, after the promulgation of the Act, new challenges relating to ecological, social and environmental developments have emerged at national as well as international levels. For example mitigating the impact of climate change, achieving the national targets of Net Zero Emission by 2070, maintaining or enhancing the forest carbon stock, etc. Therefore, to carry forward the country's rich tradition of preserving forests and their bio-diversity and to tackle the climate change challenges, it is necessary to encompass such issues in the ambit of the Act.

Therefore, to achieve the country's national as well as international commitments of NDCs, carbon neutrality, eliminate the ambiguities and bring clarity about the applicability of the Act in various lands, promoting the plantation in non-forest land, enhancing the productivity of the forests, amendment has been proposed in the Act and the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023 has been moved by the Central Government.

The amendments passed by the Lok Sabha include insertion of a Preamble to broaden the scope of the Act, changing the name of the Act as Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 so as to ensure that potential of its provisions is reflected in its name, clarifying the scope of applicability of the Act in various lands to eliminate ambiguities.

In addition to these amendment, certain exemptions, as proposed in the Bill, have also been passed by the Lok Sabha which include exemption of strategic projects concerning national security located within 100 km of distance from the International Borders, Line of Actual Control, Line of Control, 0.10 ha of forest land proposed to be provide connectivity to habitation and establishments located on the side of roads and railways, up to 10 ha of land proposed for security related infrastructure and up to 5 ha of forest land in Left Wing Extremism Affected Districts for public utility projects. All these exemptions considered in the Bill will be subject to such terms and conditions, including compensatory afforestation, mitigation Plans, etc., as will be specified by the Central Government. To bring uniformity, existing provisions of the Principal Act relating to assignment of forest land on lease to private entities has been extended to Government companies as well. The Bill also added new activities viz. infrastructure for frontline forest staff, ecotourism, zoo and safari into the array of forestry activities for the cause of conservation of forests. Surveys and investigation in the forest areas will not be considered as a non-forestry activity in view of the fact that such activities are temporary in nature and involve no perceptible change in the land use. The Section 6 of the Bill empowering the Central Government to issue directions for the proper implementation of the Act, has also been passed by the Lok Sabha.

Elimination of ambiguities in the applicability of Act will facilitate the decisions making process on the proposals involving non-forestry use of forest land by the authorities. Exemption of such recorded forest land which have already been put to non-forestry use before 12.12.1996 by the orders of the competent authority can be used for taking benefits of various developmental schemes of the State as well as Central Government.

Inclusion of more activities, as forestry activities in the Bill such as infrastructure for frontline will help to secure quick response to natural hazards in the forests. For want of enabling provisions in the Act, it is difficult to create such basic infrastructure in the forest area thereby affecting the forestry operations, regeneration activities, monitoring and supervision, prevention of forest fires, etc. These provisions will pave the way for better management of forest for improved productivity and flow of ecosystem goods and services will also add to mitigate the impact of climate change and conservation of forests.

Activities like establishment of Zoo and Safaris, etc. will be owned by Government and will be set up as per the Plan approved by the Central Zoo Authority outside the Protected Areas. Similarly, ecotourism, as per approved Working Plan or Wildlife Management Plan or Tiger Conservation Plan will be taken up in the forest areas. Such facilities, besides sensitizing and generating awareness about the importance of protection and conservation of forest land and wildlife, will also add to the livelihood sources of local communities and thereby providing them opportunities to connect with the mainstream of development.

The amendment proposed in the Bill as passed by the Lok Sabha will refurbish the spirit the Act for conservation and augmentation of forests. These amendments will act as a milestone in the enhancement of the productivity of forests, raising plantations outside forests and strengthening the regulatory mechanism besides catering to the livelihood aspirations of the local communities.

PIB,JULY28,2023

PM addresses G20 Environment and Climate Ministers' Meet in Chennai

“In India, nature and its ways have been regular sources of learning”

“Climate Action must follow ‘Antyodaya’ which means ensuring the rise and development of the last person in the society”

“India has set a target of attaining ‘Net Zero’ by 2070”

“70 percent of the world’s tigers are found in India today as a result of Project Tiger”

“India’s initiatives are powered by people’s participation”

“Mission LiFE as a global mass movement will nudge individual and collective action to protect and preserve the environment”

“Mother Nature prefers ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ - One Earth, One Family, One Future”

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi addressed the G20 Environment and Climate Ministers’ Meet in Chennai via video message today. Welcoming the dignitaries to Chennai, the Prime Minister remarked that the city is rich in culture and history. He also urged them to explore the ‘must visit’ destination of Mamallapuram which is a UNESCO World Heritage site and one can experience inspiring stone carvings and its great beauty.

Quoting the great poet Thiruvalluvar from about two thousand years ago, the Prime Minister said, “Even the oceans will shrink, if the cloud that has drawn its waters up, does not give it back in the form of rain”. Speaking about nature and its ways of becoming a regular source of learning in India, the Prime Minister quoted another Sanskrit Shlok and explained, “Neither rivers drink their own water nor trees eat their own fruits. Clouds also don't consume grains produced by their water”. The Prime Minister emphasized providing for nature as nature provides for us. He said that protecting and caring for Mother Earth is our fundamental responsibility and today, it has taken the shape of ‘Climate Action’ as this duty was ignored by many for a very long time. Based on India’s traditional knowledge, the Prime Minister said that Climate Action must follow ‘Antyodaya’ which means ensuring the rise and development of the last person in the society. Noting that countries of the Global

South are particularly impacted by Climate Change and environmental issues, the Prime Minister stressed the need to enhance action on commitments under the ‘UN Climate Convention’ and the ‘Paris Agreement’ as it can be crucial in helping the Global South fulfill its developmental aspirations in a climate-friendly way.

The Prime Minister expressed pride in informing that India has led the way through its ambitious ‘Nationally Determined Contributions’. He mentioned achieving the installed electric capacity from non-fossil fuel sources 9 years ahead of the target of 2030 and now setting the bar even higher through updated targets. He also mentioned that today India is one of the top 5 countries in the world, in terms of installed renewable energy capacity and informed that the country has set a target of attaining ‘Net Zero’ by 2070. Shri Modi expressed optimism as India continues to collaborate with its partners through alliances including International Solar Alliance, CDRI, and the ‘Leadership Group for Industry Transition’.

“India is a mega-diverse country”, the Prime Minister remarked as he highlighted the consistent actions taken on biodiversity conservation, protection, restoration and enrichment. He expressed happiness that the restoration of priority landscapes impacted by forest fires and mining is being recognized through the ‘Gandhinagar Implementation Roadmap and Platform’. He mentioned the recently launched ‘International Big Cat Alliance’ for the conservation of seven big cats on the planet and credited the learnings of the ‘Project Tiger’, a pioneering conservation initiative. He informed that 70 percent of the world’s tigers are found in India today as a result of Project Tiger. The Prime Minister also touched upon work being underway on Project Lion and Project Dolphin.

Underlining that India’s initiatives are powered by people’s participation, the Prime Minister mentioned ‘Mission Amrit Sarovar’ which is a unique water conservation initiative where more than 63,000 water bodies have been developed in just about one year. He informed that the mission has been implemented entirely through community participation, and aided by technology. He also touched upon ‘Catch the Rain’ campaign

which has led to the construction of more than 280,000 water harvesting structures to conserve water along with the construction of nearly 250,000 re-use and recharge structures. “All this was achieved through people's participation and focused on local soil and water conditions”, the Prime Minister added. Shri Modi also touched upon effectively utilizing community participation in the ‘Namami Gange Mission’ to clean the river Ganga which has resulted in the major achievement of the reappearance of the Gangetic Dolphin in many stretches of the river. Referring to the 75 wetlands designated as Ramsar sites in wetland conservation, the Prime Minister said that India has the largest network of Ramsar sites in Asia.

Referring to the ‘Small Island States’ as ‘Large Ocean Countries’, the Prime Minister said that the oceans are a crucial economic resource for them while also supporting the livelihoods of over three billion people across the globe. He said that it is home to extensive biodiversity and stressed the importance of responsible use and management of oceanic resources. The Prime Minister expressed optimism for the adoption of ‘G20 High Level Principles for a Sustainable and Resilient Blue and Ocean-based Economy’ and called on the G20 to work constructively for an effective international legally-binding instrument to end plastic pollution

The Prime Minister recalled launching Mission LiFE – Lifestyle for Environment along with the UN Secretary General last year and said that Mission LiFE as a global mass movement will nudge individual and collective action to protect and preserve the environment. In India, the Prime Minister said, environment-friendly actions by any person, company or local body will not go unnoticed. He informed that green credits can now be earned under the recently announced ‘Green Credit Programme’. He explained that activities like tree plantation, water conservation, and sustainable agriculture can now generate revenue for individuals, local bodies and others

Concluding the address, the Prime Minister reiterated that we should not forget our duties towards Mother Nature. He expressed confidence that the G20 Environment and Climate Ministers' Meet would be productive and successful. "Mother nature does not favor a fragmented approach. She prefers "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" - One Earth, One Family, One Future", Shri Modi concluded.

PIB,JULY28,2023

World Nature Conservation Day

National Zoological Park, New Delhi (Delhi Zoo) celebrated World Nature Conservation Day today. The theme for World Nature Conservation Day 2022 was "Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet".

The programme commenced by delivering the goals of LiFE after which "Segregation of Waste Material" and "Waste to useful products" were conducted to address the importance of this practice in reducing wastes, helping to minimize the negative impact on our environment. After the presentation, a doodle activity was conducted and students participated enthusiastically.



GPS Map Camera



New Delhi, DL, India
Zoological Park Road, National Zoological Park, New
Delhi, 110003, DL, India
Lat 28.606538, Long 77.247649
07/28/2023 12:03 PM GMT+05:30
Note : Captured by GPS Map Camera

The goal of arranging this activity at National Zoological Park was to create awareness among the students to promote concept of Lifestyle for Environment by staying close to the nature and its conservation. A pledge was also taken on Mission-LiFE.

TRIBUNE,JULY29,2023

Forest conservation

Need to review new Bill's contentious provisions

THE role of forests in combating climate change and protecting biodiversity cannot be overemphasised. It's not surprising that deforestation is among the prime factors which have exacerbated the damage caused by the monsoon this year in the hill states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Despite experts' apprehensions, the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill-2023 was passed by the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. The Bill seeks to exempt land within 100 km of India's borders from the purview of conservation laws and permit the setting up of zoos, safaris and eco-tourism facilities in forest areas.

Last week, around 400 ecologists, scientists and naturalists had written to the Environment Minister and MPs, asking them not to table the Bill during the Monsoon Session. Citing the devastating impact of climate change and environmental degradation, they had claimed that the legislation would only hasten the decline of India's natural forests. In a bid to allay their fears, the Union Government has stated that all exemptions would be subject to terms and conditions, including compensatory afforestation and mitigation plans. According to experts, freeing forestland for infrastructure projects of national importance or for zoos, eco-tourism and reconnaissance surveys may adversely affect forest cover and wildlife. Some provisions of the Bill are also being seen as a potential threat to the Aravalli ranges, which are yet to be notified as deemed forests in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi.

No less worrisome is the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's admission that just 36 per cent of the money released under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund across the country in the past five years has been utilised. Under the National Mission for Green India — which aims to protect, restore and enhance India's forest cover — fund utilisation has been a modest 55 per cent. The new Bill could worsen the situation and prove to be counterproductive. Its contentious provisions need to be reviewed on priority.

CURRENT EVENTS

PIB, JULY 24, 2023

PM to dedicate to nation International Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (IECC) complex at Pragati Maidan on 26th July

Developed at a cost of about Rs 2700 crore, the sprawling complex is spread over 123 acres

It is India's largest MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) destination and finds place among the top exhibition and convention complexes across the world

Multiple state-of-the-art facilities including new Convention Centre, Exhibition halls, amphitheatres etc have been developed

A grand architectural marvel, the Convention Centre will host large-scale international exhibitions and conferences

Developed in the shape of Shankha, it incorporates several architectural elements of India's traditional art and culture

The newly-built complex will play a key role in promoting India as a global business destination

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will dedicate to the nation the International Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (IECC) complex at Pragati Maidan on 26th July, 2023. Prime Minister's vision of having a world class infrastructure for hosting meetings, conferences and exhibitions in the country has led to the conceptualization of the International Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (IECC) at Pragati Maidan. The project, which revamped the old and outdated facilities at Pragati Maidan, was developed as a National project at a cost of about Rs 2700 crore. With a campus area of approximately 123 acres, the IECC complex has been developed

as India's largest MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) destination. In terms of the covered space available for events, the IECC Complex finds its place among the top exhibition and convention complexes in the world. The newly developed IECC complex at Pragati Maidan comprises of multiple state-of-the-art facilities including Convention Centre, Exhibition halls, amphitheaters etc.

The Convention Centre is developed as the centerpiece of Pragati Maidan complex. It is a grand architectural marvel, designed to host large-scale international exhibitions, trade fairs, conventions, conferences, and other prestigious events. It is equipped with multiple meeting rooms, lounges, auditoriums, amphitheater and business centre, making it capable of hosting a wide range of events. Its majestic multi-purpose hall and plenary hall have a combined capacity of seven thousand people, which is larger than the seating capacity of the famous Sydney Opera House in Australia. Its magnificent Amphitheater is equipped with a seating capacity of 3,000 individuals.

The architectural design of the Convention Centre building is inspired from Indian traditions and showcases India's confidence and conviction in its past while also embracing modern facilities and way of life. The shape of the building is derived from the Shankha (conch shell), different walls and facades of the Convention Centre depict several elements of India's traditional art and culture including 'Surya Shakti' highlighting India's efforts in harnessing solar energy, 'Zero to ISRO', celebrating our achievements in space, Pancha Mahabhuta signifying the building blocks of universal foundation - Aakash (Sky), Vayu (Air), Agni (Fire), Jal (Water), Prithvi (Earth), among others. Also, various paintings and Tribal art forms from different regions of the country adorn the Convention Centre. Other facilities available in the Convention Centre include 5G-enabled fully Wi-Fi covered campus, 10G Intranet connectivity, interpreter room equipped with cutting-edge technology to support 16 different languages, advanced AV systems with huge-sized video walls, building management system ensuring optimal functionality and energy efficiency, light management system with

dimming and occupancy sensors, state-of-the-art DCN (Data Communication Network) system, integrated surveillance system and energy-efficient centralized air conditioning system.

Further, the IECC complex features a total of seven exhibition halls, each serving as a versatile space for hosting exhibitions, trade fairs, and business events. The exhibition halls are designed to accommodate a diverse range of industries and showcase products and services from around the world. These state-of-the-art structures are a testament to modern engineering and architectural prowess.

The development of the area outside the IECC is also thoughtfully designed that complements the beauty of the main complex and a testimony of careful planning and development that has gone into this project. The sculptures, installations, and murals showcase the rich cultural heritage of India; Musical Fountains adds an element of enchantment and spectacle; Water Bodies such as ponds, lakes, and artificial streams, enhance the tranquility and aesthetics of the area.

The convenience of visitors is a priority at the IECC, reflected in the provision of over 5,500 vehicle parking spaces. The ease of access through signal-free roads ensures that visitors can reach the venue without any hassle. Also, the overall design prioritizes the comfort and convenience of attendees, facilitating seamless movement within the IECC complex.

The development of the new IECC complex at Pragati Maidan will help in promotion of India as a global business destination. It will also play a vital role in boosting trade and commerce, leading to economic growth and job creation. It will support the growth of small and medium enterprises by providing them with a platform to showcase their products and services on a national and international stage. It will also facilitate knowledge exchange and encourage the dissemination of best practices, technological advancements, and industry trends. IECC at Pragati Maidan epitomizes India's pursuit of economic and technological excellence in the spirit of Aatmanirbhar Bharat and is a step towards building a New India.

East Zonal Conference on PM-Gatishakti & National Logistic Policy

East Zonal Conference on PM-Gatishakti and National Logistic Policy was held on 16.02.2023 at Bhubaneswar. The objective is to bring different Ministries, States, Departments & Industries together for integrated planning and coordinated development of logistics infrastructure with emphasis on the States of Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Bihar. It aims at improving logistics efficiency and reducing logistics cost.

PM Gatishakti National Master Plan portal is a digital platform launched by the Government of India for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects in the country for movement of people, goods and services. It includes integrated planning for infrastructure development in the States of Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Bihar. This information was given by Union Minister of Coal, Mines and Parliamentary Affairs Shri Pralhad Joshi in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

PIB, JULY 25, 2023

President Murmu Completes One Year in Office Lays Foundation Stones/Inaugurates Various Projects at Rashtrapati Bhavan Launches e-Book on One Year of Presidency

The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu completed one year in office today (July 25, 2023).

The President expressed happiness that through technology Rashtrapati Bhavan has been able to connect with more and more people in past one year. She expressed confidence that Rashtrapati Bhavan officials would continue to work for making the system more transparent and effective by using technology and innovation.

To mark the completion of one year of her presidency, President Murmu participated in number of activities. These include:

1. Laid the foundation stone for redevelopment of Shiva Temple situated in the President's Estate
2. Laid the foundation stone for construction of a Cricket Pavilion at the Sports Ground of Dr. Rajendra Prasad Kendriya Vidyalaya, President's Estate
3. Inaugurated Navachara - an Artificial Intelligence enabled gallery developed by Rashtrapati Bhavan in collaboration with Intel India. This gallery exhibits immersive innovations and indigenous AI solutions created by students and AI coaches. It is equipped with six interactive exhibits that provide insights into the grandeur of Rashtrapati Bhavan and ignite a sense of inspiration for democratizing AI skills.
4. Inaugurated Sutra-kala Darpan – a Textile Collection of Rashtrapati Bhavan. This gallery showcases a remarkable collection of antique textiles that document the illustrious legacy of Rashtrapati Bhavan. Rashtrapati Bhavan is a repository of distinct textile traditions, ranging from zardozi and gold-embroidered velvets in its carpets, bed and table coverings, to fine muslin and silk drapes. Each masterpiece exhibits not only artistic brilliance but also serves as a precious document of this iconic building's enduring legacy.
5. Inaugurated Janjatiya Darpan - a gallery to showcase the common and connecting cultural traits of various tribal communities. The aim of this gallery is to provide a glimpse of rich art, culture and the contributions of tribal communities in building this nation. The gallery consists of different themes such as unsung Tribal Freedom Fighters, Traditional Natural Resource management practices like Halma, Dokra Art, Musical Instruments, Gunjala Gondi Script, Agricultural and Household implements, Bamboo Baskets, Textiles, Paintings such as Warli, Gondi and Mud Art, Scroll, Masks and Jewellery, Metal work, Weapons, Contemporary Photographs depicting the Tattoos, Diorama depicting an ecological setting and scepters. This

galley is established by Rashtrapati Bhavan in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts (IGNCA).

6. Launched the redeveloped website of the President of India and Rashtrapati Bhavan in the presence of Secretary to the President, Shri Rajesh Verma, Director General of NIC, Shri Rajesh Gera and other officials from Rashtrapati Bhavan and NIC. She also released a compilation of glimpses of past one year of Presidency in the form of an e-book (link <https://rb.nic.in/rbebook.htm>).

7. Received first copy of the book on Ayush Wellness Centre, President's Estate, titled 'Preserving Health, Embracing Traditions'.

In his short remarks at the website launch event, Secretary to the President said that Rashtrapati Bhavan has undertaken several citizen centric initiatives in past one year such as opening of Rashtrapati Niwas, Mashobra and Rashtrapati Nilayam throughout the year for public, increasing the duration of opening of Amrit Udyan and increasing the number of visitor slots. A Chintan Shivir was organized to boost out-of-box thinking and improve the overall working and living environment in the President's Estate. He thanked the President for her guidance and patronage in these initiatives.

[STATESMAN, JULY 29, 2023](#)

Let's do this together: Semiconductor giants collaborate with India

[In a significant move towards strengthening the semiconductor industry, semiconductor giant AMD announced on Friday its plan to invest approximately \\$400 million in the country over the next five years to expand research, development and engineering operations.](#)

The company plans to build a new campus in Bangalore with the largest R&D facility in the world. The announcement came at the SemiconIndia 2023 in Gujarat in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

AMD investment is expected to create the largest AMD design center with the addition of approximately 3,000 engineering roles, the company said. They are an active part of the semiconductor ecosystem in India since 2001 with the company's first site established in New Delhi. While addressing the event, PM Modi said Bharat never disappoints anyone. "The relations with industry, experts, and policymakers get updated through Semicon India. I believe that this is crucial for the synchronisation of our relations," he added.

At the event, prominent semiconductor companies like Foxconn, Micron, AMD, IBM, Marvell, Vedanta, LAM Research, NXP Semiconductors, STMicroelectronics, and others were present. Apart from AMD, another key global player in the semiconductor industry, Foxconn shows optimism towards India's semiconductor market and said Taiwan is and will be India's most trusted and reliable partner.

"Let's do this together," Young Liu, Chairman of Foxconn said.

India-Japan collaboration over semiconductor

In a separate development, Indian and Japanese officials held discussions in New Delhi, exploring potential collaboration in semiconductors and establishing robust supply chains. As per reports, the talks aimed at achieving a target of \$35.9 billion in Japanese investment in India by 2027. The meeting was attended by the foreign ministers of both countries – S Jaishankar, and Yoshimasa Hayashi – who also discussed cooperation in defence equipment and technology.

Odisha bags deal with the US

Amid the deals being locked in SemiconIndia 2023, on Thursday, Odisha bagged a deal with US-based Silicon Power Group which will invest \$121.73 million in the state.

The investment aims to make 150-millimeter silicon carbide, a semiconductor component. The company has committed to start operations in the next 18 to 24 months, as per a statement by the Chief Minister's Office. The investment will be made by the group's RiR Power Electronics, it added.

Vol.1. (44), JULY 31 – AUG 6, 2023

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Making it possible for civil services aspirants



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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

PIB, JULY 31, 2023

NATIONAL MISSION ON LIBRARIES SCHEME PROVIDES FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO STATE CENTRAL LIBRARY AND DISTRICT LIBRARY IN EACH STATE AND UT

Ministry of Culture through its National Mission on Libraries (NML) scheme provides financial assistance to state central library and district library in each State and Union Territory.

The objective of National Policy on Library and Information System (NAPLIS), as envisaged by the Committee, formed in 1985 under the chairmanship of Prof. D. P. Chattopadhyaya to foster, promote and sustain the organizations, availability and use of information and to take steps for mobilizing and upgrading the existing Library and Information system and services, taking advantage of the latest advances of the technology; and training of library & information personnel, have been fulfilled with the implementation of National Mission on Libraries (NML), especially through National Virtual Library of India (NVLI) component, under which Indian Culture Portal (ICP) was developed and launched. The ICP is available on public domain at <https://indianculture.gov.in/>.

For development of Library Sector in the country, Ministry of Culture through its National Mission on Libraries (NML) Scheme, under 'Setting up of NML Model Library' component, provides financial assistance to 1 State Central Library and 1 District Library in each State and Union Territory, as per the recommendation of the State Authority concerned, and 6 libraries identified by Ministry of Culture, for modernization and infrastructure development.

Besides, Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF), an Autonomous Body under Ministry of Culture, through its matching and non-matching schemes provides financial assistance to public Libraries for various purposes e.g. construction / renovation of library buildings, up-gradation of infrastructure with furniture and equipment, modernization, procurement of books and reading resources, organization of seminar, training and capacity building of library professionals, workshop, outreach programmes, establishment of children corner, opening of various sections, creating facilities for specially-abled, brail corner etc. This reply was given by Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Development of North-Eastern Region Shri G.Kishan Reddy in Lok Sabha today in a written reply

PIB, JULY 31, 2023

National Education Policy, 2020 provides for setting up a Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF) especially for girls and transgender students to provide them equitable quality education

The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 focuses on 'Equitable and Inclusive Education' which reverberates the idea that no child should be left behind in terms of educational opportunity because of their background and socio-cultural identities. It has taken into account the concerns of the Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) which includes female and transgender individuals. In addition, NEP prescribes to approach gender as a cross-cutting priority to achieve gender equality in education with the partnership of states and local community organizations.

National Education Policy, 2020 provides for setting up a Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF) especially for girls and transgender students to build the nation's capacity to provide equitable quality education for all girls as well as transgender students. The objectives of NEP for equitable and quality education for girl children are being met through specific provisions under Samagra Shiksha 2.0 by allocating dedicated resources for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). Under Samagra Shiksha, various interventions have been

targeted for providing quality education to girls, which include opening of schools in the neighbourhood to make access easier for girls, free uniform and text-books to girls up to class VIII, additional teachers and residential quarters for teachers in remote/hilly areas, appointment of additional teachers including women teachers, stipend to CWSN girls from class I to class XII, separate toilets for girls, teachers' sensitization programmes to promote girls participation, gender-sensitive teaching-learning materials including text books etc.

In addition, to reduce gender gaps at all levels of school education, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs), which are residential schools from class VI to XII for girls belonging to disadvantaged groups such as SC, ST, OBC, Minority and Below Poverty Line (BPL), are sanctioned in Educationally Backward Blocks. As on 30.06.2023, a total of 5639 KGBVs have been sanctioned in the country with the enrolment of 6.88 lakh girls. The task of up-gradation of the KGBVs was started in the year 2018-19 and till the year 2022-23, a total of 357 KGBVs have been approved for up-gradation to Type-II (class 6-10) and 2010 KGBVs have been approved for up-gradation to Type-III (class 6-12).

The information was given by the Minister of State for Education, Smt. Annpurna Devi in a written reply in the Lok Sabha today.

PIB,AUGUST2,2023

Digital India initiative of Government has revolutionized education access in rural areas

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India launched the 'Digital India' programme with the vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge-based economy by ensuring digital access, digital inclusion, digital empowerment and bridging the digital divide.

To achieve these objectives, particularly in rural, tribal and remote areas, Ministry of Education offers high quality educational programmes through DTH channels as well as web platforms under the aegis of PM e-Vidya.

Some of the major education initiatives are as follows:

- DIKSHA the nation's digital infrastructure for providing quality e-content for school education in States/UTs and QR coded Energized Textbooks for all grades (one nation, one digital platform). Till date (25.07.2023) DIKSHA has clocked more than 524 crores learning sessions, more than 6,125 crore learning minutes with more than 2.2 crore average daily page hits. A total of 3,17,496 pieces of e-contents are live on DIKSHA as on date.
- 12 DTH Channels in school education and 22 SWAYAM PRABHA channels in higher education are already functional. As per budget announcement for Financial Year 2022-23, the 12 DTH Channels would be expanded to 200 (Two hundred) PM e-Vidya DTH TV Channels.
- SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) is the national MOOC platform with provision of credit transfer to Universities, for Higher Education Courses. NIOS and NCERT are National Coordinator for school sector courses under SWAYAM, delivering school courses from 9th to 12th. On SWAYAM Portal a total of 10,451 Courses are available out of these courses, 257 courses of NCERT and 431 courses of NIOS are available. For NCERT courses 4.1 lakh students are registered and for NIOS courses more than 34 lakh students are registered.

To realize the vision of Digital India, all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education to enable multi-mode access to education are organized under PM e-Vidya banner as part of Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan.

The information was given by the Minister of State for Education, Smt. Annpurna Devi in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha today.

PIB,AUGUST3,2023

Shri Dharmendra Pradhan and Shri S. Jaishankar jointly launch Study in India (SII) Portal in New Delhi

SII Portal is a one-stop platform that will simplify international students' academic journey in India - Shri Dharmendra Pradhan

Study in India Portal is going to be a pivotal step in making India a preferred destination for higher education - Shri Dharmendra Pradhan

SII will establish a strong international footprint of brand 'India' in the education sphere – Dr. S. Jaishankar

In line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of re-establishing India as a global hub of education, Union Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan and Union External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar jointly launched Study in India Portal in New Delhi today. Minister of State for Education Dr Subhas Sarkar; Minister of State for Education, Smt Annpurna Devi; Minister of State for Education and External Affairs Shri Rajkumar Singh; Member of Parliament, Dr Mahesh Sharma; senior officials of Ministry of Education and Skill Development and Ambassadors of more than 10 countries attended the event. On the occasion, students from Russia, Thailand, Japan, Ethiopia, Ecuador, Kazakhstan and Republic of Korea who are currently studying in India, presented souvenirs from their culture as token of respect to dignitaries.

Study in India Portal is a dedicated website that will provide comprehensive information about the Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The website will illustrate academic programs covering but not limited to undergraduate (UG), postgraduate (PG), Doctoral level programs as well as courses in Indian Knowledge System like Yoga, Ayurveda, classical arts etc. The website-portal will present information about the academic facilities, research support, and related information. The new website will now have the provision for students to apply in more than one institute/course of their choice. The new portal will provide an integrated one-stop solution for student registration and visa application process. Speaking on the occasion Shri Pradhan said that SII Portal is a one-stop platform that will simplify international students' academic journey in India. Guided by the NEP, the SII Portal reflects our commitment to make India a preferred education destination as well as to blur academic boundaries for shaping a prosperous future, he added. Shri Pradhan further said with the vision of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi of making education transcend geo-political boundaries, Study In India Portal is going to be a pivotal step in making India a preferred destination for higher education among students worldwide, he added.

While addressing the gathering, Dr. S. Jaishankar said that the portal signifies the Government's commitment to make India a global hub of education by welcoming students of diverse backgrounds. It will establishing a strong international footprint of brand 'India' in the education sphere. From registration to visa approval and selecting desired courses or institutions, the portal will simply the entire journey of the international students wishing to study in India, he added. The Minister further said that the presence of international students will also benefit the domestic students by connecting them more closely to globalizing world and prepare them better form the global workplace. He mentioned how implementation of NEP2020 has already initiated entrance of foreign universities in India and opening of international campuses of our premier institutions.

Key Features:

Partnership with Premier Education Institutes: The Study in India programme involves partnership with educational institutes fulfilling one of the following criteria:

National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) ranking (≤ 100)

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) accreditation score (≥ 3.01)

Institutes of National Importance (INI)

This ensures premier institutions being the partner to enrolling international students coming to study in India.

The Study in India programme offers a streamlined and well-organized application process for international students seeking higher education opportunities in Indian Higher Education Institutes. From registration to visa approval, the online platform simplifies the entire journey, enabling students to choose their desired courses, receive institute offer letters, and successfully pursue their academic dreams in India. By providing a seamless experience, the SII programme continues to attract talented and ambitious students from around the world to study in India's vibrant and culturally diverse academic environment. Study in India is a flagship program of the Government of India, under the aegis of the Ministry of Education (MoE). The Study in India programme aims to increase the number of international students in India. The program also envisions promoting India as the preferred study destination, providing affordable and quality education comparable with global standards thereby contributing to improving the overall quality improvement in higher education. India being one of the largest higher education system in the world, our universities offer a diverse range of courses catering to the evolving needs of the global workforce. The Study in India programme seeks to facilitate international students' access to these courses and showcase the country's academic excellence.

PIB,AUGUST4,2023

National Health Authority (NHA) extends its incentive scheme under Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) to encourage digital health adoption by hospitals, labs, pharmacies and health tech companies

The Digital Health Incentives Scheme (DHIS) that offers incentives of up to Rs. 4 crores under ABDM, has been extended till 31st December 2023

The National Health Authority (NHA) announces extension of its Digital Health Incentives Scheme (DHIS) under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) till 31st December 2023. Under DHIS, incentives are provided to hospitals and diagnostic labs and to the providers of digital health solutions such as Hospital/ Health Management Information System (HMIS) and Laboratory Management Information System (LMIS) for adopting and enabling transformative digitization under ABDM.

The DHIS was launched with effect from 1st January, 2023 as part of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission. The scheme proved to be a significant catalyst in promoting the adoption of digital health technologies and practices in healthcare delivery across the country. Owing to its impact and response from the healthcare providers and health tech companies, the scheme has been extended to allow more stakeholders to benefit from the financial incentives.

Talking about the purpose behind extension of the incentive scheme, CEO NHA said - “The extension of this incentive scheme under ABDM reaffirms NHA's commitment to fostering a digitally inclusive healthcare ecosystem and underscores the Government of India's dedication to advancing accessible and efficient healthcare services across the nation. With initiatives like DHIS, we plan to recognize and encourage healthcare providers and enablers to collaborate and help build a digitally empowered healthcare ecosystem.”

Under the DHIS, the eligible health facilities and digital solutions companies shall be able to earn financial incentives of up to Rs. 4 crores based on the number of digital health records created and linked to ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account) numbers of the patients. This incentive can be availed by the health

facilities (hospitals, diagnostic labs) and Digital Solution Companies, registered with ABDM's Health Facility Registry (HFR) and fulfilling the eligibility criterion specified under the scheme. It is anticipated that the DHIS advantages offered to the DSCs will contribute to cost reduction or will be transmitted further to the relevant healthcare facilities to pay their digitization costs, etc.

As on date, 1205 health facilities have registered under this scheme with 567 public and 638 private hospitals/clinics/ diagnostic labs. Further, out of the 25 digital solution companies registered, 22 are from the private sector. Till June 2023, close to 120 health facilities and 7 health tech companies have received incentives totalling to Rs. 4.84 Cr. The incentive recipients include government hospitals like AIIMS Delhi, AIIMS Raipur, AIIMS Bhopal, Lok Bandhu Rajnarayan Combined Hospital, Lucknow, KC General Hospital Bengaluru and private hospitals like KGMU, Lucknow, KIMS Hubballi Bengaluru among others. Diagnostic labs like Indira Path Labs Delhi and Lucknow, Sahayog Pathology Laboratory Pune and Leo Clinical Lab Kannur and digital solution companies like NIC (Nextgen HMIS), CDAC (eSushrut), Driefcase, Ekacare (Orbi Health), Bajaj Finserv and Paytm are some of the top performing entities under DHIS.

Further, NHA is continuously monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the DHIS for ABDM adoption and make suitable changes about its continuation, modification, budget, or otherwise, as and when required. A dashboard for this has been created for this purpose: <https://dashboard.abdm.gov.in/abdm/>. More details about the incentive scheme are available at: <https://abdm.gov.in/DHIS>.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

PIB,AUGUST1,2023

Farmer Welfare Scheme

Details of five major schemes launched by the Government during the last four years are given in the Annexure. The efforts of Government for positive implementation of the schemes are yielding good result and the income of the farmers is improving. As a part of “Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav” Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has released a book, which contains compilation of success stories of 75,000 farmers out of innumerable successful farmers whose incomes have increased more than two times.

A comprehensive range of central sector and centrally sponsored schemes has been implemented by the Government to address various aspects of agriculture and benefit farmers including small and marginal farmers. However, there are currently no plans to implement a distinct policy for smaller farmers.

Annexure

Brief of five major schemes introduced by the Government during the last four years for farmers’ welfare

Sl No.

Scheme

Brief description

1.

The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)

The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme is being implemented with a view to provide income support to all landholding Farmers' families across the country to enable them to take care of expenses related to agriculture and allied activities as well as domestic needs. The Scheme, effective from 1.12.2018, aims to provide a payment of Rs.6000/- per year for the farmers' families with cultivable land holding, subject to certain exclusions. The financial benefit of Rs.6000/- is being released by the Central Government in three 4-monthly installments of Rs.2000/- over the year directly into the bank accounts of the eligible farmers under Direct Benefit Transfer mode.

2.

Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)

The Government of India has launched the Central Sector Scheme (CSS) for "Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)" in the year 2020. Formation & promotion of FPOs are to be done through Implementing Agencies (IAs), which further engage Cluster Based Business Organizations (CBBOs) to form & provide professional handholding support to FPOs for a period of 05 years including preparation and execution of business plan for the concerned FPOs for ensuring better marketing opportunities & market linkages on sustainable basis.

3.

Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF)

In order to address the existing infrastructure gaps and mobilize investment in agriculture infrastructure, Rs 1 lakh crore Agri Infra Fund was launched under Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund is a medium - long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest

management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and credit guarantee support.

4.

National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)

A new Centrally Sponsored Scheme namely, National Mission on Edible Oil (NMEO)-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP) has been launched by Government of India to promote oil palm cultivation for making the country Aatamnirbhar in edible oils with special focus on North-Eastern States and A&N Islands. The Mission will bring additional area of 6.5 lakh ha under Oil Palm plantation with 3.28 lakh ha in north-eastern states and 3.22 in Rest of India in next 5 years from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

5.

National Beekeeping & Honey Mission (NBHM)

Keeping in view the importance of beekeeping, a new Central Sector Scheme entitled National Beekeeping & Honey Mission (NBHM) was launched in 2020 under AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan for its implementation in the field for overall promotion and development of scientific beekeeping & to achieve the goal of “Sweet Revolution”.

This information was given by the Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

PIB,AUGUST1,2023

New record of over 6.77 crore Income Tax Returns (ITRs) filed till 31st July, 2023; record growth of 16.1% Year-on-Year

64.33 lakh ITRs filed on 31st July, 2023

53.67 lakh ITRs from first time filers indicates widening of tax base

5.63 crore ITRs already e-verified, with more than 3.44 crore (61%) ITRs for AY 2023-24 processed by 31st July, 2023

The Income-tax Department appreciates the taxpayers and tax professionals for making compliances in time, leading to a surge in filing of Income-tax Returns (ITRs), resulting in a new record of ITRs filed. The total number of ITRs for AY 2023-24 filed till 31st July, 2023 are more than 6.77 crore, which is 16.1% more than the total ITRs for AY 2022-23 (5.83 crore) filed till 31st July 2022.

The filing of ITRs peaked on 31st July, 2023 (due date for salaried taxpayers and other non-tax audit cases) with over 64.33 lakh ITRs being filed on a single day i.e. on 31st July, 2023. The e-filing portal also observed its highest per hour rate of 4,96,559 of ITR filing between 5 PM to 6 PM on 31st July, 2023, with highest per second rate of ITR filing of 486 (31-Jul-2023: 16:35:06) and highest per minute rate of ITR filing of 8,622 (31-Jul-2023: 17:54).

The Department also received 53.67 lakh ITRs till 31st July, 2023 from first time filers, a fair indication of widening of tax base. Campaigns on Socialmedia along with targeted e-mail and SMS campaigns were launched to encourage the taxpayers to file their ITRs early. Such concerted efforts led to fruitful results with taxpayers filing their ITRs for AY 2023-24 relatively earlier compared to the corresponding period of the preceding year. The following data corroborates the same:

ITR filing milestone

AY 2022-23

AY 2023-24 1 crore 8th July 2022

26th June 2023

2 crore

20th July 2022

11th July 2023

3 crore

25th July 2022

18th July 2023

4 crore

28th July 2022

24th July 2023

5 crore

30th July 2022

27th July 2023

5.83 crore

31st July 2022

30th July 2023

6 crore ---

30th July 2023

6.77 crore

31st July 2023

Out of the 6.77 crore ITRs filed for AY 2023-24, 49.18% of ITRs are ITR-1 (3.33 crore), 11.97% are ITR-2 (81.12 lakh), 11.13% are ITR-3 (75.40 lakh), 26.77% are ITR-4 (1.81 crore) and 0.94% are ITR-5 to 7 (6.40 lakh). Over 46% of these ITRs have been filed using the online ITR utility available on the e-filing portal and the balance have been filed using offline ITR utilities. During the peak filing period, e-filing portal successfully handled huge traffic providing a seamless experience to taxpayers for filing of ITRs. During the period from 1st July, 2023 to 31st July, 2023, there were more than 32 crore successful logins on the e-filing portal. On 31st July, 2023 itself, successful logins stood at 2.74 crore.

It is heartening to note that a large number of taxpayers did their due diligence by comparing data of their financial transactions by viewing their Annual Information Statement (AIS) and Taxpayer Information Summary (TIS). A substantial portion of the data for ITR-1,2,3 and 4 was already prefilled with data pertaining to salary, interest, dividend, personal information, tax payment including TDS related information, brought forward losses, MAT credit etc to further ease compliance for taxpayers. The taxpayers used this facility extensively, resulting in smoother and faster filing of ITRs. The process of e-verification through Aadhaar OTP and other methods is important for the Department to commence processing of the ITR and to issue refunds, if any. It is encouraging to note that 5.63 crore returns have been e-verified, out of which more than

5.27 crore are through Aadhaar based OTP (94%). Of the e-verified ITRs, more than 3.44 crore ITRs for AY 2023-24 have been processed (61%) by 31st July, 2023.

Further, a new e-pay tax payment platform TIN 2.0 was made available on the e-filing portal, replacing the earlier Protean (NSDL) based OLTAS payment system. This enabled provision of more user-friendly options for e-payment of taxes and making available more number of options for mode of payments such as Internet Banking, NEFT/RTGS, OTC, Debit Card, payment gateway and UPI. TIN 2.0 platform has enabled real time credit of taxes to taxpayers which made ITR filing easier and faster. Over 1.26 crore challans have been received through TIN 2.0 payment system in the month of July, 2023 itself, while total challans filed through TIN 2.0 since 1st April, 2023 stands at 3.56 crore.

The e-filing Helpdesk team has handled approximately 5 lakh queries from taxpayers in the month of July, 2023 supporting the taxpayers proactively during the peak filing period. The support from the helpdesk was provided to taxpayers through inbound calls, outbound calls, live chats, webex and co-browsing sessions. Helpdesk team also supported resolution of queries received on the Twitter handle of the Department through Online Response Management (ORM), by proactively reaching out to the taxpayers/ stakeholders and assisting them for different issues on near real-time basis. The Department is thankful for the support in timely compliances and requests all taxpayers to verify their ITRs within 30 days of filing. The Department also urges taxpayers, who for any reason, missed the due date, to complete their filing immediately.

[TELEGRAPH,AUGUST5,2023](#)

Poor logic: Editorial on PM Modi's thrust against welfarism in Opposition-ruled states

The prime minister does not seem allergic to the BJP's populism in the guise of welfare given that Yogi Adityanath's free rations to the poor helped the BJP return to power in Uttar Pradesh

In a democracy, public welfare is not a matter of benevolence. It entails the rights of the people. Indeed, the democratic compact between a government and citizens — they elect the government — is predicated upon the State's ability to bring wide swathes of the population, especially those on the margin, within the ambit of welfarism. So it is a bit strange that the prime minister of the mother of democracies has scoffed at the political commitment towards the greater good. Interestingly, Narendra Modi was being selective even in his censure, as he usually is with facts. Speaking at a public rally, Mr Modi said that he is especially concerned about attempts by state governments — he, evidently, had Congress-ruled Karnataka and Rajasthan in mind — to provide assistance to the weakest segments of society. It is pertinent to mention that the Congress's five guarantees in Karnataka, including a monthly stipend for women heads of households, financial assistance to unemployed graduates and so on, had helped it win the last assembly elections. In Rajasthan, the Congress has also unveiled public welfare programmes in health, employment and for the gig economy. Mr Modi hinted that such initiatives are deleterious for the coffers of the state. But that need not be the case always. Bengal, another state often accused of profligacy by

Mr Modi's party, has, numbers suggest, actually improved its debt-to-GDP ratio. Moreover, the prime minister does not seem allergic to the Bharatiya Janata Party's populism in the guise of welfare. Yogi Adityanath's free rations to the poor helped the BJP return to power in Uttar Pradesh. Indians are, of course, still waiting for Mr Modi to fill their coffers with his promised sum of Rs 15 lakh. Ironically, the BJP's ideological commitment to antyodaya — emancipating the last person in the line — is consistent with the notion of public welfare. Why point fingers at Opposition-ruled states then?

Mr Modi's thrust against State welfarism has acquired a degree of consistency. Earlier, he had courted controversy by conflating collective, equitable well-being with the 'revdi' culture of freebies. His regressive views would justify the State's further withdrawal from public welfare projects. What India, a deeply stratified

society with a pronounced burden of poverty, needs is the opposite. The Centre must assist all states in their endeavour to help the needy. That is what Mr Modi owes to federalism and democracy as prime minister.

MINT,AUGUST5,2023

Shaping India's agricultural legacy for next 25 years

Balram Singh Yadav

India is one of the biggest agricultural countries in the world. More than half the population depends on agriculture and its allied sectors for livelihood. The country has the second-largest area under agriculture, after China, and is one of the largest crop-based food producers. It ranks among the top 10 global agri exporters with agriculture constituting about 12 per cent of all domestic merchandise exports annually.

And yet, these singular achievements hide the real potential of the Indian agriculture sector whose growth has averaged a modest 4.6 per cent in recent years. This is in spite of the fact that – in the course of 75 years of independence – the 'land of the farmer' has evolved from a state of food shortage to one of food surplus.

A multitude of challenges – the unsustainable use of land and water; fragmented landholdings preventing farmers from adopting modern agri practices; lack of affordable credit; inadequate infrastructure such as market access, transportation and storage facilities; the spread of pests and insects; and price volatility, among others – has been impacting farm productivity, sustainability and growth. But these issues can be addressed through a holistic approach backed by cutting-edge techniques and the involvement of key stakeholders including farmers, policymakers, researchers and private entities.

Perhaps, the biggest threat to agriculture in our times is climate change, the intermittent cycles of heat and drought on one hand and heavy rains and floods on the other. These extreme weather patterns result in either water scarcity or water surplus and in both cases lead to a decline in cultivable land and crop production. The situation calls for urgent risk-mitigation strategies such as climate-resilient sustainable farming systems, especially in vulnerable regions. This will certainly help farmers cope with the adverse impact of climate change.

A recent Niti Aayog vision document calls for a paradigm shift in agriculture and charts a path to making India a developed nation by 2047. It addresses four priority areas, among others, which will help farmers overcome challenges and explore emerging opportunities in sustainable and inclusive agri food systems. This will, in turn, shape India's agricultural legacy for the next 25 years – the end of which will mark 100 years of Independence – thus achieving the goals set for Amrit Kaal, or Golden Era.

Enhancing food security and nutrition

India's winning proposal to declare 2023 as the International Year of Millets is aimed at strengthening domestic and global food security and nutrition. However, this goal can succeed only if the growth rate of food production surpasses that of human population. Now that India is a food-surplus nation, it is perhaps time to emphasise on nutritive and healthy foods, as well as biofortification, the process of improving the nutritional quality of food crops.

Adopting a climate-smart approach

With unpredictable weather conditions rendering farmers more vulnerable to crop and income losses, we need to tackle climate change on a war footing. India must provide farmers with cheap finance and skill training so that they can adopt climate-friendly technologies that will help them anticipate and prepare for unexpected

weather events and conserve resources during pre- and post-harvest activities. There is also a need to expand the use of seed technology so as to improve the quality of their food crops and livelihoods.

Promoting value chains for small farmers

With nearly 70 per cent of landholding in India being less than one-hectare, small farmers are at a disadvantage when it comes to adopting innovative practices, maximising productivity and generating higher incomes. There are two ways to improve their plight: One, give the farmers access to affordable credit, tech-based knowledge and necessary skills to produce high-value crops. And two, develop efficient post-harvest food systems, including value chains that will give them access to better markets and procurement prices. Here, the role of agritech startups in adopting new-age technologies such as AI, IoT and Big Data Analytics to improve the food value chain cannot be underscored enough. These startups are providing farmers with unique solutions, including for weather forecasting and farm mapping, thereby helping them to boost farm processes and productivity.

Moving from traditional to digital farming

Agriculture is changing at a rapid pace due to digital and other emerging technologies, leaving behind farmers engaged in traditional agri-food systems. These farmers need a transformative breakthrough if they are to catch up with the tech-driven agri space. The dissemination of knowledge and training in the effective use of technologies like app-based platforms, e-commerce and digital payments will open up new marketing and income opportunities for farmers. And it is herein that the collaboration between the new-age and traditional companies will go a long way in reaching out to the farmers across the length & breadth of the country.

Conclusion

The Indian agriculture sector is on the cusp of change. Technology and innovation are slowly and steadily enriching the agri space, as evident from the advances in farming including mechanisation, conservation practices, food diversity and sustainability, cost-effective crop production and employment opportunities. Additionally, new regulations are creating a favourable environment for the private sector vis-à-vis pre- and post-harvest phases, output and income growth, and land-lease market.

While all these are positive developments for the sector, a possible source of concern is the lack of interest in agribusiness among the younger generation. While we are educating farmers about new farming and sustainable practices, we should simultaneously encourage the young to enter the agribusiness and become agricultural entrepreneurs thereby driving socio-economic change across the sector.

ECONOMIC TIMES,AUGUST6,2023

Centre likely to hike dearness allowance by 3 pc to 45 pc

The central government is likely to increase the dearness allowance (DA) for its over one crore employees and pensioners by three percentage points to 45 per cent from the existing 42 per cent as per the agreed formula for the purpose. The dearness allowance for employees and pensioners is worked out on the basis of the latest Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW) brought out by the Labour Bureau every month.

The Labour Bureau is a wing of the Labour Ministry.

Talking to PTI, All India Railwaymen Federation General Secretary Shiva Gopal Mishra said, "The CPI-IW for June 2023 was released on July 31, 2023. We are demanding a four percentage point hike in dearness allowance. But the dearness allowance hike works out to be a little over three percentage points. The government does not factor in hiking DA beyond the decimal point. Thus DA is likely to be increased by three percentage points to 45 per cent"

He further explained that the expenditure department of the Finance Ministry will formulate a proposal to hike DA along with its revenue implication and will put up the proposal before the Union Cabinet for approval.

The DA hike will be effective from July 1, 2023. Presently, over one crore central government employees and pensioners are getting a 42 per cent dearness allowance. The last revision in DA was done on March 24, 2023, and was effective from January 1, 2023. The Centre had increased DA by four percentage points to 42 per cent based on the percentage increase in the 12 monthly average of the All India Consumer Price Index for the period ending December 2022. The DA is provided to employees and pensioners to compensate them for rising prices. The cost of living increases over a period of time and is reflected through CPI-IW. The allowance is revised periodically twice a year.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

PIB,JULY31,2023

Date for accepting applications under PLI scheme 2.0 for IT Hardware extended till August 30, 2023

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme 2.0 for IT Hardware was notified vide notification No. CG-DL-E-30052023-246165 dated May 29, 2023, with a budgetary outlay of ₹ 17,000 crore. The scheme is aimed at broadening and deepening of the IT hardware manufacturing ecosystem in the country. The Operational Guidelines of Production Linked Incentive Scheme 2.0 for IT Hardware has been notified on 14.07.2023 and are available at following URL :<https://www.meity.gov.in/esdm/production-linked-incentive-scheme-pli-20-it-hardware>

The application window for receiving applications under PLI Scheme 2.0 for IT Hardware has been extended till August 30, 2023. The application portal for the aforesaid scheme has been made live and applicants can register/apply at <https://2.pliithw.com/login>.

PIB,AUGUST2,2023

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh says, India is the fifth amongst spacefaring nations having end-to-end capabilities in space research and development, including the capability to launch from our own land and operate programs of earth observation, satellite communication, meteorology, space science & navigation and ground infrastructure

Right now, NewSpace industries are also emerging at fast pace after space sector reforms: Dr Jitendra Singh Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh today said, India is the fifth amongst

spacefaring nations having end-to-end capabilities in space research and development, including the capability to launch from our own land and operate programs of earth observation, satellite communication, meteorology, space science & navigation and ground infrastructure. In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Dr Jitendra Singh informed that right now NewSpace industries are also emerging at fast pace after space sector reforms. The Minister also listed out significant progress made by ISRO during the last five years. Some of the major achievements are listed below:

27 satellites and 22 Launch Vehicle missions have been successfully accomplished during the period (July 2018 – July 2023), besides the successful Pad Abort Test (PAT) to qualify the Crew Escape System (CES) in July 2018 and the Reusable Launch Vehicle autonomous landing mission in April 2023.

In June 2018, India announced a capacity building training programme UNNATI (UNISpace Nanosatellite Assembly & Training by ISRO) on Nanosatellites development through a combination of theoretical coursework and hands-on training on Assembly, Integration and Testing (AIT). A total of 90 participants from 45 countries benefitted from the program across three batches. (Two in 2019 and 1 in 2022).

India's second mission to Moon, Chandrayaan-2 was successfully launched on July 22, 2019 on-board GSLV Mk III-M1. Chandrayaan-2 Orbiter is providing valuable science data for the research community.

The launch of PSLV-C48/ RISAT-2BR1 in December 2019 marked the 50th launch of PSLV, the workhorse launch vehicle.

In 2019, ISRO launched an annual special programme called "Young Scientist Programme" or the "YUva Vigyani Karyakram" (YUVIKA), in line with the Government's vision "Jai Vigyan, Jai Anusandhan". A total of 603 students have attended the YUVIKA program spread over 3 years – 2019, 2022 and 2023.

In 2019, the NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) got incorporated, as a wholly owned Government of India Undertaking/ Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE), under the administrative control of Department of Space (DOS). On June 26, 2020, the Government of India announced Space Sector Reforms – a major transformation of Indian Space Sector with enhanced participation of private players in Indian space programme and playing key roles to boost India's market share in Global Space Economy. Setting up of Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) and enhancing the role New Space India Limited (NSIL) are the two major thrust areas in the Reform.

The establishment of IN-SPACe was announced in June 2020 by Government of India, as an autonomous agency under Department of Space, to create eco-system of industry, academia and start-ups and to attract major share in the global space economy, by authorizing and regulating activities of NGEs in space sector through detailed guidelines and procedures. IN-SPACe Headquarters at Ahmedabad was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in June 2022.

The Hon'ble Minister of State (Department of Space) dedicated ISRO System for Safe & Sustainable Space Operations Management (IS4OM) to the nation in July, 2022.

LVM3 (GSLV MkIII) M2/OneWeb India-1 Mission was successfully accomplished on 23rd October 2022.

Launch of Vikram-S (Prarambh mission), a suborbital launch vehicle from M/s Skyroot Aerospace Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad, was accomplished successfully on 18th November 2022. First private launchpad & mission control center established by M/s Agnikul Cosmos Pvt. Ltd., Chennai in ISRO campus at SDSC, SHAR on 25th November 2022.

On Feb 10th, 2023, the successful flight of Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV – D2) took place, launching three satellites – EOS-07, Janus-1 and AzaadiSAT-2 (a combined effort of about 750 girl students across India guided by Space Kidz India, Chennai).

On March 7th, 2023, controlled re-entry experiment for the decommissioned Megha-Tropiques-1 (MT-1) satellite was carried out successfully, with final impact in the Pacific Ocean, demonstrating the nation's continued efforts towards ensuring the long-term sustainability of outer space activities.

LVM3 M3/OneWeb India-2 Mission was successfully accomplished on 26th March, 2023, placing 36 OneWeb satellites into their intended orbit. With this, NSIL successfully executed its contract to launch 72 satellites of OneWeb to Low Earth Orbit. Reusable Launch Vehicle Autonomous Landing Mission (RLV LEX) was successfully demonstrated at the Aeronautical Test Range (ATR), Chitradurga, Karnataka on 2nd April, 2023. GSLV-F12/NVS-01 mission was successfully accomplished on 29th May, 2023. GSLV deployed the NVS-01 navigation satellite, the first of the second-generation satellites envisaged for the Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) service, into a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit. LVM3-M4 successfully launched the Chandrayaan-3 Spacecraft on 14th July, 2023. Lunar orbit insertion activities are in progress and Moon landing is scheduled on 23rd August, 2023.

PIB, AUGUST 2, 2023

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh says, the Government is exploring the options of collaborating with other countries and taking up indigenous development of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)

The provisions of Atomic Energy Act, 1962 are being examined to allow participation of private sector and start-ups to promote SMRs technology in the country: Dr Jitendra Singh

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh today said, the Government is exploring the options of collaborating with other countries and taking up indigenous development of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).

In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Dr Jitendra Singh informed that the future course of action will be finalized on the basis of the decision of the Government. He also informed that the provisions of Atomic Energy Act, 1962 are being examined to allow participation of private sector and start-ups to promote SMRs technology in the country. Dr Jitendra Singh said, SMR is a promising technology in industrial decarbonization especially where there is a requirement of reliable and continuous supply of power. India is considering steps for development of SMR, to fulfil its commitment to Clean Energy transition.

The Minister said, detailed technical discussions are currently underway to plan a roadmap for studying the feasibility and effectiveness of deployment of such reactors. Augmentation of nuclear power capacity through large size reactors is the primary goal of the Department.

PIB,AUGUST2,2023

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh says, battery operated vehicles pose a major demand in inventions of battery storage technology and battery recycling technology

Government is supporting research to develop indigenous capabilities in the area of Lithium-ion (Li-ion) battery electrode materials, cells and battery packs for Electric Vehicles (EVs): Dr Jitendra Singh

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh today said, battery operated vehicles pose a major demand in inventions of battery storage technology and battery recycling technology. In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Dr Jitendra Singh informed that all Electric Vehicles (EVs) have energy storage systems, typically batteries to power the vehicle, which requires advancement in storage technologies to make it affordable and attractive in market adoption. He said, in order to balance the supply of raw materials for batteries and keeping in view the thrust on sustainability & circular economy, inventions in battery recycling technologies are also important.

The Minister informed that the Government is supporting research to develop indigenous capabilities in the area of Lithium-ion (Li-ion) battery electrode materials, cells and battery packs for EVs. Several research projects with significant funding are in progress with an aim to enable indigenous development of battery technologies. Department of Science & Technology (DST) have supported approximately thirty- two R&D-related projects in the area of battery storage, which resulted in several publications and lab level prototypes. Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar & Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur has developed a Sodium (Na) ion battery pack, a battery management system, a charger, and a cell balancing system for e-bicycle. In addition; two battery recycling technology research projects are also being supported.

Central Electro Chemical Research Institute, (CECRI), a lab under Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has established a small scale (1000 cells per day) Lithium- ion cell manufacturing line at its Chennai unit. CSIR also initiated a Bulk Chemical Mission Project to develop a technology that dismantles 100kg spent Lithium Ion Battery (LIB)s and can extract all metals from LIB electrode material and demonstrate at 1kg product level.

The key challenge faced by the Government in the research of battery storage technologies is primarily in sourcing of raw materials. Though country's Lithium-ion (Li-ion) battery requirement is huge, there is no domestic manufacturing of Li-ion batteries at present and the majority of the demand is catered through imports. Further, the important raw material resources required such as Lithium, Cobalt are scarce and needs to be imported. There is no established supply chain for electrode materials and components yet in our country. CSIR-National Metallurgical Laboratory (CSIR-NML), Jamshedpur has developed and patented CSIR's first holistic process that can tackle any type of Lithium based batteries, to extract and separate high pure salt products from Lithium, Nickel, Cobalt, Manganese, Aluminium, Copper, and Reusable Graphite.

PIB,AUGUST4,2023

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh introduces a Bill to establish the Anusandhan National Research Foundation in the Lok Sabha today

NRF will provide high level strategic direction for research, innovation and entrepreneurship in the fields of natural sciences including mathematical sciences, engineering and technology, environmental and earth sciences, health and agriculture: Dr Jitendra Singh

NRF, an apex body to provide high-level strategic direction of scientific research in the country as per recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP), at a total estimated cost of Rs. 50,000 crores during five years (2023-28)

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh today introduced a Bill in the Lok Sabha to establish the Anusandhan National Research Foundation. Introducing the Bill, Dr Jitendra Singh said, when passed by Parliament the Act will provide high level strategic direction for research, innovation and entrepreneurship in the fields of natural sciences including mathematical sciences, engineering and technology, environmental and earth sciences, health and agriculture. The Minister said, it will also promote scientific and technological interfaces of humanities and social sciences to promote, monitor and provide support as required for such research and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

It may be recalled that on 28th June, 2023 the Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved the introduction of the National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill, 2023 in the Parliament. The approved Bill will pave the way to establish NRF that will seed, grow and promote Research and Development

(R&D) and foster a culture of research and innovation throughout India's universities, colleges, research institutions, and R&D laboratories. The bill, after approval in the Parliament, will establish NRF, an apex body to provide high-level strategic direction of scientific research in the country as per recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP), at a total estimated cost of Rs. 50,000 crores during five years (2023-28).

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) will be the administrative Department of NRF which will be governed by a Governing Board consisting of eminent researchers and professionals across disciplines. Since the scope of the NRF is wide-ranging – impacting all ministries - the Prime Minister will be the ex-officio President of the Board and the Union Minister of Science & Technology & Union Minister of Education will be the ex-officio Vice-Presidents. NRF's functioning will be governed by an Executive Council chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.

NRF will forge collaborations among the industry, academia, and government departments and research institutions, and create an interface mechanism for participation and contribution of industries and State governments in addition to the scientific and line ministries. It will focus on creating a policy framework and putting in place regulatory processes that can encourage collaboration and increased spending by the industry on R&D. The bill will also repeal the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) established by an act of Parliament in 2008 and subsume it into NRF which has an expanded mandate and covers activities over and above the activities of SERB.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

PIB,JULY31,2023

Green India Mission

National Mission for a Green India (GIM) is one of the eight Missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change. The target under the Mission is 10 m ha on forest and non-forest lands for increasing the forest/tree cover and to improve the quality of existing forest. Based on the perspective plans submitted by the States and as per the availability of funds, so far seventeen States namely Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Odisha, Punjab, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and one union territory Jammu & Kashmir have been taken up under GIM.

The States are considered for funding under GIM after evaluation of their perspective plan and Annual plan of operations prepared in accordance with the guidelines of GIM. The state of Telangana has not submitted their Perspective Plan and Annual Plan of Operations under GIM so far and therefore no funds have been allocated to the State under GIM. The Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO), NITI Aayog, Government of India, has conducted the Evaluation of National Mission for a Green India in 2020-21 on aspects such as Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability, Impacts and Equity within the scheme and has further recommended the continuation of scheme.

This information was given by Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey in a written reply in the Lok Sabha today.

PIB,JULY31,2023

National Forest Policy

Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun, an organization under the Ministry carries out the assessment of forest cover biennially, since 1987 and the findings are published in India State of Forest Report (ISFR). The total forest and tree cover of the country as per ISFR 2021 assessment is 8,09,537 square kilometer which is 24.62% of the geographical area of the country. The total forest and tree cover has increased by 2261 square kilometer as compared to the ISFR 2019 assessment. The Ministry provides technical and financial assistance to States/UTs under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes namely Green India Mission (GIM), Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme, CAMPA, Nagar Van Yojana and other schemes of line ministries to increase the forest and tree cover of the country as per the mandate of National Forest Policy. Green India Mission (GIM) activities were started in the Financial Year 2015-16. During the last five years, the amount of Rs. 755.28 Crores has been released to seventeen States and one union territory for taking up the afforestation activities.

The Ministry has also implemented Centrally Sponsored Scheme, National Afforestation programme for regeneration of degraded forest and adjoining areas in the country. Under the scheme, an amount of Rs. 108.57 crore has been released during the years 2019-20 to 2021-22. National Afforestation Programme is now stands merged with Green India Mission.

The Ministry is implementing Nagar Van Yojana (NVY) since the year 2020 which envisages creation of 600 Nagar Vans and 400 Nagar Vatika in the country during the period 2020-21 to 2024-25 under the funds available under Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAMPA). The Nagar Van Yojana aims to enhance the green cover in the urban and peri-urban areas including biological diversity, provide ecological benefits and improve the quality of life of city dwellers. So far, the Ministry has approved 270 projects under Nagar Van Yojana with the total cost of Rs.238.64 Crore.

The Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAMPA fund) is being utilized by States/UTs for taking up compensatory afforestation as per approved Annual Plan of Operations for compensating the loss of forest & tree cover due to diversion of forest land for developmental projects as per provisions of Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016 (CAF Act) and CAF Rules, 2018. During the last five years, an amount of Rs. 55,394.16 Crore has been released to State/UT Forest Department under CAMPA funds.

Afforestation activities are also taken up under various programmes and schemes of line Ministry such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, National Bamboo Mission, Sub-Mission on Agroforestry etc. and under schemes of State Government/UT Administration through different departments, Non-Government Organizations, Civil Society, Corporate bodies etc. The multi departmental efforts have yielded good results in conserving and enhancing forest cover in the country. Ministry has formulated draft National Forest Policy after wide consultations with various stakeholders, including inter-ministerial consultations and placed in public domain in 2018. The draft Policy recommends to integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in forest management including resilience to climate change by forest dependent communities.

This information was given by Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey in a written reply in the Lok Sabha today.

PIB,AUGUST1,2023

An illegal tiger trade syndicate busted, the former field officer of WPSI arrested: WCCB

On 29.07.2023 Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), an apex body constituted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to combat the organised wildlife crime and illegal wildlife trade issued a red alert to all Tiger reserves and tiger bearing areas to intensify the patrolling and sanitise all above areas from hunting gangs. based on the credible inputs. On 28.06.2023 a tiger skin and bones

were seized and 05 offenders arrested at Guwahati by Assam Forest and police officials. The case was transferred by the Assam forest department to WCCB for investigation as the case showed involvement of multiple states. The WCCB constituted an SIT to investigate the Guwahati tiger skin and bone seizure case. The preliminary interrogation of the offenders showed that the tiger body parts seized belong to the Gadchiroli area in Maharashtra. These initial interrogation findings were shared by the WCCB with the Maharashtra forest department officials. Based on WCCB inputs 10 members hunting gang belonging to the Bawariya community were arrested from Gadchiroli area. Leg-hold traps and tiger body parts were also recovered from them. One of the offenders wanted in the Guwahati seizure case was also arrested from the Gadchiroli area. Based on the interrogation of the offender arrested in Guwahati and Gadchiroli. Further investigation taken up. It was found that a person Mr. Mishram Jakhad in Dwarika controls and dictates the tiger. poaching and illegal trade of tiger body parts. He not only sponsors the tiger illegal trade syndicate but also. exploits huge money from the poachers, smugglers and blackmails them. On 31.07.2023. the WCCB SIT officials along with the Gadchiroli team raided the suspects premises. Mr. Mishram Jhakad was arrested alongwith cash of Rs. 14.80 Lac suspected to be connected to illegal trade in tiger parts. During the search. an ID card has been recovered from Jakhad showing that he has worked as field officer of WPSI (Wildlife Protection Society of India). He has confessed that he has worked in the wildlife wing of the forest department, NCT Delhi Government. A case has been registered u/s 9/ 39/ 48/ 49A/ 50/ 51 / 52 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and he was produced before the Honb'le court. In response to the transit remand filed to take him to Gadchiroli for further interrogation with his associates, The Honb'le court has granted him a transit bail, considering his age (81yrs) but. directed the accused to appear before the court and the Investigation Officer in such date and time he is asked. It suspected that the Offender Mishram Jakhad is well connected to the tiger poachers and smuggling syndicates.

Along with Maharashtra forest officials, the WCCB SIT is probing deeply into the tiger poaching and illegal trade network under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) will also be roped in for investigation of this predicate offense under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

PIB,AUGUST2,2023

Consultative Committee Meeting of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change held on ‘75@75 Ramsar Sites’

A meeting of the Consultative Committee of Members of Parliament attached to Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) was held in New Delhi today . The meeting was chaired by Union Minister of Environment Forest and Climate Change Shri Bhupender Yadav. Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Kumari Agatha Sangma, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Shri Ganesh Singh, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Shri Sunil Kumar Soni, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Shri Ayodhya Rami Reddy, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), Shri Ramulu Pothuganti, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Dr. Kirodi Lal, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), Shri Janardan Mishra, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Shri Kotagiri Sridhar, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Shri Mahesh Sahoo, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Shri Amar Patnaik, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), Shri Binoy Viswam, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), and officials of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, participated in the meeting.

During the meeting, India's significant milestone on the 75th year of independence by declaring 75 wetlands to the list of Wetlands of International Importance of the Ramsar Convention was highlighted. The network of Indian Ramsar Sites covering approx. 1.33 million ha, over 8% of the known wetland extent of the country is the second largest in Asia and fifth in the world in terms of total number of designated Ramsar Sites. The committee members appreciated the efforts of MoEF&CC for designating 75 wetlands as Ramsar Sites.

Committee members were also appraised about the recently announced Amrit Dharohar Initiative launched on 5th June 2023 by MoEF&CC during the World Environment Day. Amrit Dharohar is an initiative that aims to promote conservation values of Ramsar Sites to create demonstration, replication, and upscaling effect on other wetlands of national and international importance. The scheme is to be implemented over the next three years with a goal of conservation and wise use of Ramsar Sites for safeguarding and enhancing biological diversity, cultural heritage, food, water and climate security, sustainable livelihood opportunities and societal well-being. Guided by the Mission LiFE and Sahbhagita approach, the implementation strategy of Amrit Dharohar consists of four key components such as Species and Habitat Conservation, Nature Tourism, Wetlands Livelihoods, Wetlands Carbon. The Committee appreciated the holistic approach of the Amrit Dharohar implementation strategy. It was agreed to take up the conservation issues of wetlands in a holistic manner and in coordination with state and UT governments involving NGOs, Panchayats and local communities.

Shri Bhupender Yadav while highlighting the importance of wetlands, shared the steps taken by the centre under PM Shri Narendra Modi for wetland protection and conservation. He also discussed India's feat of getting 75 sites designated as Ramsar sites during 75th years of independence and emphasised on the importance of wise use of wetlands.

Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey highlighted on the importance of involving panchayats and youth in wetland conservation and management.

PIB,AUGUST3,2023

Social forestry schemes

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change encourages plantation in the country including various metropolitan cities through programmes and schemes such as Nagar Van Yojana, School Nursery Yojana, Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA), National Afforestation Programme (NAP), National Mission for a Green India (GIM), etc. which promotes urban forestry, tree plantation on vacant lands and bunds on farm lands etc. by involving local communities, NGOs, educational institutions, local bodies, etc. In respect to urban areas, the Ministry is implementing the Nagar Van Yojana (NVY) the scheme initiated for creation of Nagar Van in urban areas. Under NVY 385 projects have been sanctioned so far which includes 26 numbers of projects in cities of Uttar Pradesh state.

The following additional steps taken by the Government contribute to protection and development of forest areas in the country including in the metropolitan cities:

- i. For preservation and protection of forest and wildlife, various laws including the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980, Indian Forest Act, 1927, Wildlife Protection Act 1972, and other central/state laws as applicable to a State/UT, are implemented by the respective State Government /UT Administration. The Ministry also provides financial supports to the States /UTs under Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme for protection against forest fire.
- ii. The Ministry has implemented National Afforestation Programme (NAP) for tree plantation in degraded forests through people's participation which has been merged with National Mission for a Green India (GIM),

under which, in addition to other sub-missions, there is a specific sub-mission for enhancing tree cover in urban and peri-urban areas. An area of over 2 million hectare was earmarked for taking up afforestation in the States/Union Territories (UTs) with an investment of about Rs. 3982 crores till 2022-23 under NAP since its launching in the year 2000. GIM activities were started in the FY 2015-16. So far, a sum of Rs. 755.28 crores has been released to seventeen States and one union territory for creation of plantation over an area of 153125 ha. NAP has been merged with GIM and implemented as single scheme at present.

iii. Urban forestry is a permissible activity under the provisions of Compensatory Fund Act, 2016 and the Rules made thereunder. The Government of India has disbursed an amount of Rs. 51768.76 crore from National Fund to 33 State funds as share of respective States as per Compensatory Fund Act, 2016.

iv. Further, tree plantation, being a multi-departmental, multi-agency activity, are also being taken up cross-sectorally under various programmes/funding sources of other ministries/ organizations and also through State Plan budgets.

This information was given by Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha today.

[HINDUSTAN TIMES,AUGUST5,2023](#)

Rising air pollution shows urgent need for localized climate action in the Northeast

Pradyut Bordoloi

Air pollution in northeastern cities of India, including Guwahati, has reached alarming levels. Increased monitoring and scientific research is needed

Considering the dense forest cover of India's northeast and that it harbours the last remnants of our country's rainforests - the popular perception of the northeast being a pollution-free serene region of our country has turned out to be a fallacious myth today. In March this year, Guwahati, the largest metropolis in India's northeast region, found itself in the global list of 100 most polluted cities, as well as in the list of 10 most polluted cities in Asia, according to data from the World Air Quality Index. While air quality in the northeast has been steadily deteriorating, contrary to the perception of its pristine blue skies, the issue has unfortunately failed to draw the attention it requires. In March this year, Guwahati, the largest metropolis in India's northeast region, found itself in the global list of 100 most polluted cities, as well as in the list of 10 most polluted cities in Asia. In March this year, Guwahati, the largest metropolis in India's northeast region, found itself in the global list of 100 most polluted cities, as well as in the list of 10 most polluted cities in Asia .

Although conversations on 'air pollution' and 'air quality' have been gaining momentum in recent years, these have predominantly focused on Delhi and neighbouring areas that are too episodic and fizzle after winter months. Researchers, however, have been cautioning us that air pollution is not just an urban problem, it is neither a Delhi-NCR-centric issue nor a winter phenomenon, but a national problem persisting throughout the year.

Contrary to public perception, research from the Centre for Science and Environment corroborates the expanding grasp of toxic air with northeastern cities like Guwahati, Bymohat, Dimapur, Kohima, and Agartala recording concerning levels of air pollution, to the extent that Guwahati has recorded air quality levels equal to those in Delhi-NCR, and even more severe at times. Arguably, the limited air quality data available underestimates the scale of the problem confronting the northeastern states and inhibits proper assessment of risk. However, even the limited data available to us points to mounting vulnerability and risk. On examining data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) for the first quarter of this year itself, it is apparent that for a significant number of days, recorded air quality in Guwahati has been worse than in Delhi and Mumbai,

with the Air Quality Index (AQI) being recorded above 300 (i.e very poor). This data is primarily based on monitoring of PM 2.5, the prominent pollutant which is a fine particulate matter that poses serious health risks when present in the atmosphere, and its sources can be diverse, including emissions from vehicles, industrial processes, and biomass burning. The city experienced a substantial number of days categorized as 'poor' and 'very poor' in terms of AQI.

BUSINESSLINE,AUGUST4,2023

How India can address the climate finance challenge

Apart from prompting DFIs, banks and the corporate sector to contribute more, India can benefit from carbon credits obtained through the cap-and-trade system

ANIL AGRAWAL, KAVIRAJ SINGH

Central to India's proposed approach at 28th Conference of the Parties (COP) is the recognition that adaptation and equity are cornerstones in the fight against climate change. Climate justice mandates that vulnerable countries receive the financial support and robust infrastructure needed to combat the far-reaching impacts of climate change.

Yet, the road ahead is not without its formidable financial challenges. The task of addressing the climate crisis demands massive financial commitments. Estimates reveal that the global transition to a low-carbon economy will require an annual investment of \$4-6 trillion until 2050. To achieve net-zero emissions targets by 2030, the renewable energy sector alone necessitates a yearly investment of at least \$4 trillion. Moreover, developing countries will require approximately \$6 trillion between 2022 and 2030 to successfully implement their climate action plans. To meet these staggering challenges, at least 5 per cent of the global GDP must be channelled towards climate action each year. As we approach 2030, reports indicate that external climate

finance of \$1 trillion per year will be required, significantly exceeding the current mobilised amount of \$50-80 billion annually. Furthermore, in 2020, only \$83.3 billion was provided to developing and emerging economies, often in the form of concessional and non-concessional loans.

Significant initiative

India has embarked on significant initiatives to address the issue. Notably, the establishment of the National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC) and the National Clean Energy Fund serve as shining examples of India's commitment to promoting clean energy and supporting climate-resilient infrastructure. However, despite these commendable efforts, significant funding gaps persist.

The Climate Finance Working Group's estimation that ₹118 trillion will be needed to address climate change, with only ₹64 trillion currently available and ₹54 trillion rupees unrestricted, necessitates innovative financing solutions. In this regard, development financial institutions (DFIs) and commercial banks must play a pivotal role in raising domestic funds and channelling resources from abroad to effectively bridge this gap. Moreover, it is essential for Indian corporates to take a stride forward in bolstering the carbon market, consequently prompting the need for greater innovation.

Even within the bounds of the Paris Agreement, it remains crucial for India to implement and strengthen actions prescribed under Article 6.4. This involves establishing a Clean Development Mechanism. By doing so, India can benefit from carbon credits obtained through the cap-and-trade system, which has proven effective in mitigating sulphur pollution during the 1990s, thereby balancing the wheels of development with climate change. As the curtain rises on COP28, the imperative for global collaboration on climate financing is clearer than ever before. India's proactive engagement, collaborative efforts with developed and emerging economies, and unwavering dedication to confronting climate challenges position the nation as an exemplary advocate for climate financing. Nevertheless, the fulfillment of financial commitments by developed countries

and transformative changes in the international financial system are pivotal to delivering climate financing at the scale necessary to address the global climate crisis.

G20 leadership

As the G20 presidency, India can contribute to delivering a clear political framework and shaping the outcomes expected at COP28. With G20 countries responsible for over 80 per cent of global emissions, their policy decisions will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in driving the necessary transformation. At COP28, the key areas of focus will revolve around mitigation, adaptation, loss and damages, and finance. Stronger emission reduction commitments are urgently required to combat the alarming trajectory of global warming. Climate finance remains a critical issue, necessitating the mobilisation of funds and reform of the global financial system to support climate action. In this transformation, private finance and the reform of multilateral development banks are indispensable components.

India, alongside other developing nations, is championing a new global climate finance target, acknowledging the mounting costs of addressing and adapting to climate change. India, in this context, should also take a lead in carbon pricing by setting a base price (reflective of the external costs of GHG emissions), as an effort towards mitigation and reduction of GHG emissions. The G20's leadership in driving change and scaling up climate finance is pivotal for achieving the progress needed by COP28.

Anil is Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, and Kaviraj is Founder and Managing Director, Earthood

CURRENT EVENTS

PIB,AUGUST1,2023

'Meri Mati Mera Desh' campaign will be launched to honour our martyred braveheart men and women: PM 'Amrit Vatika' to be made under 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' in New Delhi to become a grand symbol of 'Ek Bharat Shresth Bharat'

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, in his address to the people of the country during the popular programme 'Mann ki Baat' has always accorded prominence to the beautiful cultural fabric of the country and how the diversity also acts as a unifying force . In his latest address of Mann ki Baat, the Prime Minister said that in the midst of the ongoing reverberations of Amrit Mahotsav and the 15th of August round the corner, another great campaign is on the verge of being launched in the country. 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' campaign will be launched to honour our martyred braveheart men and women.He also informed, "Under this, many programs will be organized across the country in the memory of our immortal martyrs. In the memory of these luminaries, special inscriptions will also be installed in lakhs of village panchayats of the country. Under this campaign, 'Amrit Kalash Yatra' will also be organised across the country."

He further said that this 'Amrit Kalash Yatra' carrying soil in 7500 urns from every corner of the country will reach Delhi, the capital of the country. This journey will also carry with it saplings from different parts of the country. 'Amrit Vatika' will be built near the National War Memorial by fusing the soil and saplings that would arrive in 7500 urns. This 'Amrit Vatika' will also become a grand symbol of 'Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat'.

Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat programme aims to enhance interaction & promote mutual understanding between people of different states/UTs through the concept of state/UT pairing.

Speaking about Amrit Sarovars, Shri Narendra Modi said that this phase of rain is equally important for 'tree plantation' and 'water conservation'. More than 60 thousand Amrit Sarovars built during the 'Azaadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' are increasingly radiating their glow. Presently, the work of building more than 50 thousand Amrit Sarovars is going on. Our countrymen are making novel efforts for 'water conservation' with full awareness and responsibility.

Mission Amrit Sarovar has been launched on 24th April 2022 with an objective to harvest and conserve water for future generation. The salient features of the Mission Amrit Sarovar is as follows-

Mission Amrit Sarovar is based on "Whole of Government" approach with the participation from the Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change and technical organizations.

Under the Mission every district of the country will construct or rejuvenate at least 75 Amrit Sarovars.

Every Amrit Sarovar will have a pondage area of at least 1 acre with a water holding capacity of about 10,000 cubic metre.

Every Amrit Sarovar will be surrounded by trees like Neem, Peepal and Banyan etc. Every Amrit Sarovar will be a source of generation of livelihoods by using the water for different purposes like irrigation, fisheries, duckery, cultivation of water chestnut, water tourism and other activities. The Amrit Sarovar will also act as a social gathering point in that locality.

Mission Amrit Sarovar is a visible manifestation of the action during Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.

Art and Culture forms an important part of India's rich and diverse heritage. Speaking about the rich heritage of India in the 103rd episode of Mann ki Baat, the Prime Minister said, "Let us not only embrace our heritage, but also present it responsibly to the world. And I am happy that one such effort is going on in Ujjain these

days. Here 18 painters from all over the country are making attractive picture story books based on the Puranas. These paintings will be made in many distinctive styles such as the Bundi style, Nathdwara style, Pahari style and Apabhramsh style. These will be displayed in Ujjain's Triveni Museum.”

The Prime Minister also highlighted that since ancient times, our scriptures and books have been preserved on Bhojpatras. Mahabharata was also written on the Bhojpatra. Today, the women of Devbhoomi (Uttarakhand) are making very beautiful artefacts and souvenirs from the Bhojpatra. Today, the products of Bhojpatra are very much liked by the pilgrims coming here and are also buying it at good prices. This ancient heritage of Bhojpatra is filling new hues of happiness in the lives of the women of Uttarakhand.

PM also mentioned that last year on the occasion of Independence Day, the whole country came together for 'Har Ghar Tiranga Abhiyan', and said similarly this time too we have to hoist the Tricolor at every house, and continue this tradition.

PIB,AUGUST4,2023

Beneficiaries of Target Olympic Podium Scheme & Khelo India Scheme shine at 31st World University Games

India has won a total of 23 medals across 4 disciplines with highest medal count coming from shooting which has won India 14 medals including 8 Gold medals at the halfway mark of the ongoing World University Games(3rd August). Shooting is closely followed by 7 medals in Archery, and 1 medal each in Judo and Athletics. India had sent a total of 256 athletes to compete.

Out of these 23 medals, 14 medals have come from Khelo India Athletes, while all medals in Shooting (14) have been won by Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) Athletes and India's highest medal count by an individual (4, including 3 Gold) coming from TOPS Shooter Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar.

Further, it must also be noted that Khelo India Athlete Archer Aman Saini, has contributed to India winning 3 medals and team India's combined performance has resulted in India being in the Top 5 position in the medals tally for the first 5 days of the event. Their combined effort had already ensured India's best ever performance at the event with the previous best being 5 medals in 2015 University Games.

Since the inception of the World University Games in 1959, India had won a total of 18 medals till 2019 University Games (30th edition of World University Games). However, in the presently underway 31st Edition of World University Games, India has already achieved a historic total of 23 medals to date (3rd August).

A total of 71 present Khelo India Athletes are participating in the games and represent a wide range of sports, including Archery, Athletics, Badminton, Fencing, Judo, Shooting, Swimming, Table tennis, and Volleyball. Some of the major names are Tulika Maan, Commonwealth Games 2022 silver medalist in Judo, Srihari Nataraj, Tokyo Olympian swimmer as well as Indian shooting twins Udhayveer and Vijayveer Sidhu.

The Khelo India scheme is a flagship government-funded program that aims to identify and nurture sporting talent in India. The scheme has been very successful in recent years, and the athletes who have been selected for the World University Games are some of the best young talents in the country.

Srihari has been a participant in both the Khelo India Youth Games and the Khelo India University Games over the years. Manu Bhaker, too, has participated in both the Khelo India age group tournaments. The World University Games is a major international sporting platform for the Khelo India athletes to showcase their skills and quite a few athletes participating have also been competitors at the Khelo India University Games held earlier this year in Uttar Pradesh. The young athletes are competing against some of the best young athletes from around the world, and are looking to make their mark in the competition.